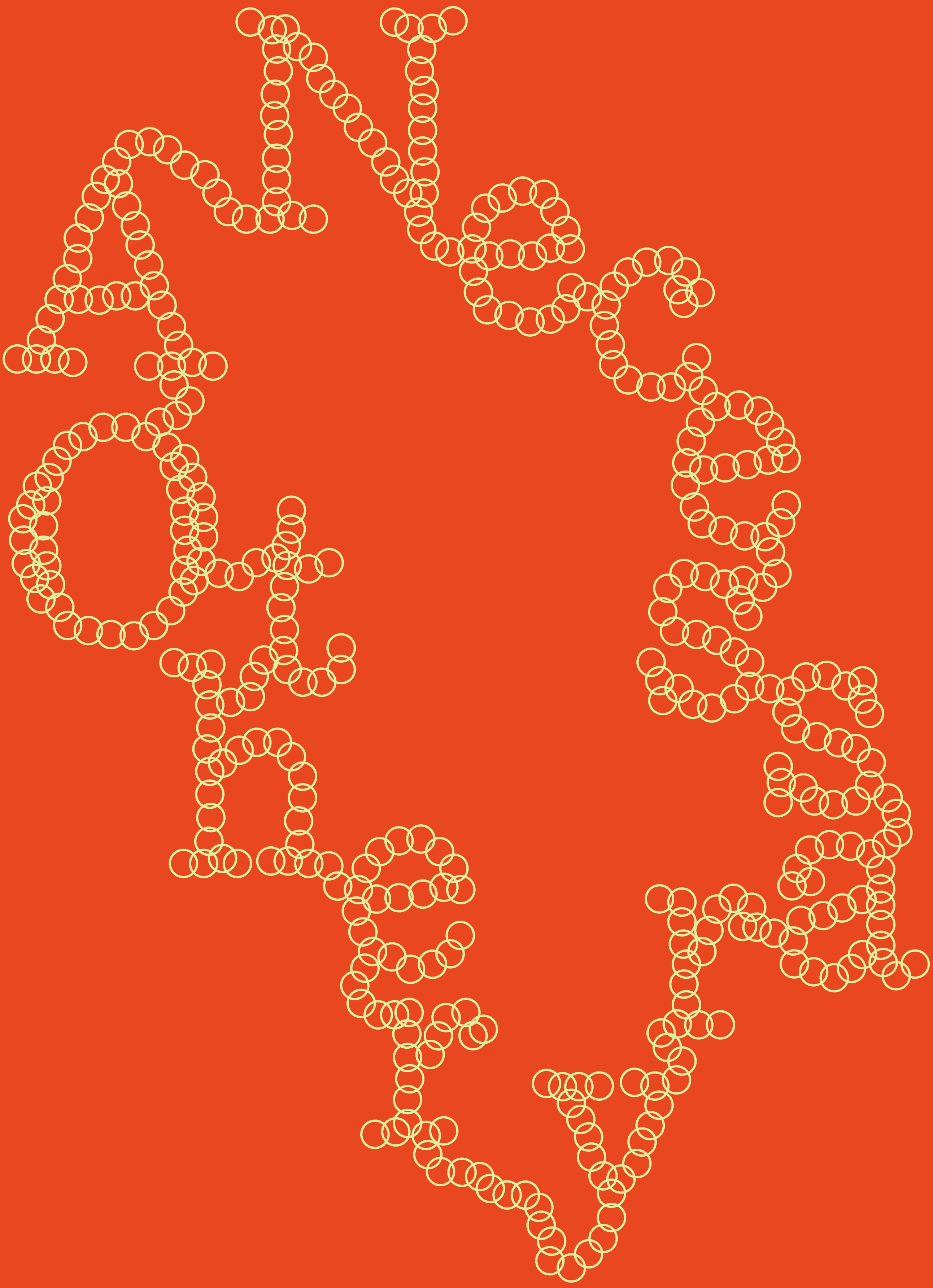
2025


A Necessary Other

HDK-Valand
Academy of Art & Design

A Necessary Other
Graduation publication
Master Fine Arts

A Necessary Other

HDK-Valand
Master Fine Art

A Necessary Other
Graduation Publication

Narrative

Nobody and nothing exists in isolation. Our understanding of ourselves – who we are as artists in society and the positions we take – takes shape through our relationships with others. These relationships are not fixed but form shifting constellations, continuously shaped by movement, dialogue, and changing contexts.

Throughout our time in the master's programme in fine art at HDK-Valand, we have developed our individual artistic practices while remaining in dialogue with one another, engaging with the program's core themes: the role of art and the artist in society, the concept of publicness, and the ethical dimensions of artistic practice. As we transition from this shared environment into new contexts, "A Necessary Other" reflects on the necessity of connection – whether with other people, creatures, sites, objects, or histories. It is through these shifting relationships that we come to understand who we are, both as artists and as participants in the wider world.

The title takes inspiration from philosopher Adriana Cavarero's thinking on relationality: identity is not something we possess in isolation but something that emerges through encounters with others. In her work, Cavarero argues that selfhood is inherently relational, formed through the narratives others tell about us. To be seen, to be heard, to be recognised: all of these require an other. The necessary other is not just a counterpart but a fundamental condition of existence, as we come to understand ourselves through the way we are addressed and remembered by others. While Cavarero's focus is primarily on human relationships, her thinking invites a broader reflection on how identity is shaped by entanglements beyond the interpersonal. Our sense of self and place is also formed through encounters with histories, landscapes, objects, and institutions – forces that narrate, shape, and situate us in ways we do not fully control.

The site of our exhibition, Skeppsbron 4, becomes a framework for "A Necessary Other" as a group exhibition. Situated on one of Gothenburg's oldest quays, the building is embedded in layers of history and transformation. Skeppsbron, once a stretch of reed beds along the Göta River, was reshaped in the 19th century with dredged material to accommodate ships, drawing maritime industries to the area. Built in 1914 as an office and banking premises for Handelsbanken, the building later housed Röda Bolaget, a tugboat shipping company operating along the river. In 1961, Gothenburg's second ever Chinese restaurant opened on Skeppsbron 4's ground floor, leading to the building to this day being colloquially known as Kinesiska muren. Since the 1970s, as Gothenburg's urban planning shifted and the city acquired the building for anticipated roadworks, Skeppsbron 4 has stood largely vacant. Today it is gradually opening up to cultural collaborations. The 5th floor, designed initially for office use, consists of a network of rooms connected by a long hallway. Some rooms remain separate while others are linked by doors. The relationships between these spaces – closed, open, connected – not only reflect how we position ourselves in relation to one another as artists and collaborators but also how we navigate our roles within broader social and artistic contexts. Just as this building has been repurposed over time, our artistic practices exist within shifting networks of influence and exchanges with wider communities, institutions, and histories – echoed in the way the space itself unfolds.

While we have each developed individual artistic enquiries over the past two years, the production of this graduation exhibition, its public program, and this publication have been collective efforts. The public program, in particular, extends the exhibition beyond the physical space, creating a discursive framework where themes explored in our works can be expanded, questioned, and reinterpreted through conversation and collaboration. It consists of workshops, discussions, walks, screenings, and other participatory formats and takes place across different sites in Gothenburg, from Skeppsbron 4 to institutions such as the Medical History Museum and the Natural History Museum. Some events are developed in collaboration with Göteborgs Konsthallen's Field Studies project, aligning with its exploration of site, commons, microhistories, radical imagination, transtemporality and the more-than-human perspective – ideas that resonate with many of our practices. For these events, we have formed groups based on shared themes and interests. Other events are entirely self-organised, alone or in groups, offering another space to articulate our artistic positions and concerns in a way that is specific to our own practices.

"A Necessary Other" explores artistic processes through media such as film, installation, performance, painting, sound, public talks, and sculpture. Whether it's the weight of carrying love, a persistent questioning of neurotypical norms, or the coexistence of humans and non-humans, the works aim to foster identification, awareness, allyship, and affective connections. This exhibition is both a culmination and a departure. It marks the end of one shared space and the beginning of new ones. As we move forward, we carry with us the understanding that to be an artist is not a solitary act – it is to exist in relation, in dialogue, in exchange.

Our enquiries are shaped by an ongoing investigation of two years supported by meetings, supervisions, educational processes and unexpected encounters on the path of artistic research. Under the guidance of our teachers, technicians, guest teachers and alumni at HDK-Valand we have been developing artistic research methods, deepening our understanding of contemporary issues and building research-led artistic projects. We would like to extend our gratitude to all those who have helped us realise both our individual and collective projects.

The processes of deepening knowledge go beyond institutional input. Friends, family members, guests, unexpected strangers: all have influenced the processes of our artistic projects. Students have also self-organised, supported each other and organised peer-to-peer sessions.

Ann-Charlotte Glasberg Blomqvist

Friction, togetherness, community, conflict, boundary setting, negotiation, debate, revolt, consensus, struggle, exchange.
How do we share this world with billions of others?
The hardships and joys of it, the necessity.

This is a publication made by and about the ten artists graduating from the MFA programme in Fine Art at HDK-Valand 2025.

Through the group exhibition at Skeppsbron 4, Gothenburg, a public programme, and this online publication, these ten artists have departed from the Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero's idea of "the necessary other" in the shaping of their common public appearance. In Cavarero's thinking about how selfhood is constructed, other people play a crucial part. It is with and through others that we build a narrative of who we are as individuals. Seen that way, we are not sovereign subjects with fixed identities, but come into being through our encounters with others in the world. It is a process of reciprocal exposure, dependence and vulnerability. We live in a time when this perspective seems particularly urgent.

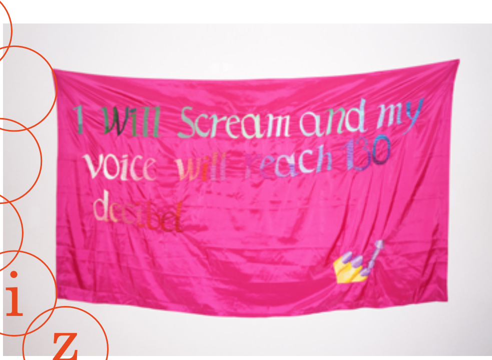
The publication offers fragments of the work that these artists have engaged with over the past two years. I hope that it will give you some insight into the diversity, complexity and interconnectedness of their artistic practices and research: Through an attempt to order clay and salt from the Crimea of her childhood, *Maria Antchougova* uncovers an entanglement of imperial histories, borderlines, archives and cultural heritage, while *Marie Bergqvist* explores connections between adoption, death, and taxidermy in an audio walk and a choir singing to a whale. *Kent Grundberg* looks at the city as a place for mycelial queer counteraction, mapping its delicate networks and histories, and *Rikke Bogetoft* attempts to radically imagine new tactics of resistance for queer individuals and communities through riot and magic. *Michael Laundry* researches the role of water in contemporary society, investigating waterscapes and hydro-choreography across sculpture, installation and performance. *Kinga Molinska* looks at the 'young girl' phenomenon through body politics, tactics of weak resistance and material investigations, *Irma Beširević* investigates human-technology relations and asks who's watching who as we find ourselves drawn to the blue tinted screens of her performances and installations, and *Jakob Niedziela* gathers ADHD-ers to think about and practice unmasking through crafting and Zumba dancing.
Last but not least, while *Vanja Qvarfordt* looks at her family's multigenerational history of eating disorders by researching and using archival Super 8 film, *Ioulia Florentzi's* embroideries, ranging from small artifacts to spatial installations, explore femininity and the power of friendship.

I wish all ten artists good luck after graduation, in how they continue to shape, and be shaped by, the world.

Ann-Charlotte Glasberg Blomqvist,
Lecturer in Art History and Writing, Fine Art

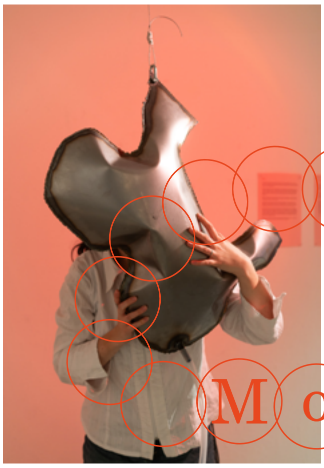
Contributions

Ioulia Florenzi


I Will Scream and my voice will reach 130 decibel

Bubbles Taboo

Kinga Molinska



K Kent Grundberg

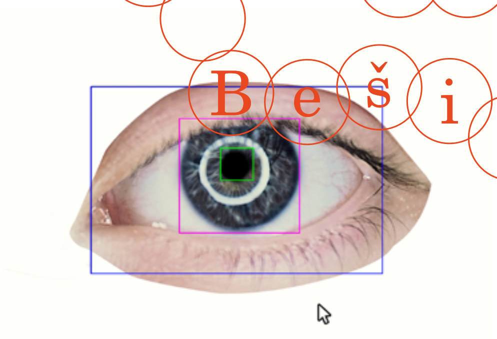
Vanja Qvarfordt

Ioulia Florenzi - To Carry This Love's Weight With Me Is Heavy
Bubbles Taboo
Kinga Molinska - Sneak out, slip away
K Kent Grundberg - Empathy and entanglement
Vanja Qvarfordt - Documenting Disorder

Jakob Niedziela - Rabbiting On
Maria Antchougova - tin box archives
Irma Beširević - Thank You For Watching Me, I'm Watching You Too
Marie Bergqvist - Singing to the Dead
Rikke Bogetoft - RIOT MAGIC

Jakob Niedziela

Maria Antchougova


Irma Beširević

Marie Bergqvist

Rikke Bogetoft

Irma Beširević

Irma Beširević (b. 1998) is a Bosnian-Swedish artist and researcher working at the intersection of choreography, surveillance, and digital infrastructures. Trained at the Royal Swedish Ballet School with an apprenticeship at the Royal Opera in Stockholm, Beširević earned a BA in Intermedia Art in Banja Luka and is currently pursuing a master's degree at HDK-Valand in Gothenburg. Their transdisciplinary practice includes video, performance, and installation, informed by collaborations with theorists and technologists including Jasmina Marić, Lou Millar-MacHugh, and Vladan Joler.

@urms.b irmabesirevic.xyz thankyouforwatchingme.cargo.site irma.besi@outlook.com

Welcome. Your biometric data has been registered.
You are now inside the feedback loop.
// Parsing gestures... [Swipe. Tap. Pause.]

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

BY ENTERING THIS SPACE, YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD, AND AGREED TO BE BOUND BY THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND CONDITIONS (“AGREEMENT”). IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO THESE TERMS, YOU MAY NOT ENTER, PARTICIPATE, OR REMAIN WITHIN THIS ENVIRONMENT. CONTINUED PRESENCE CONSTITUTES FULL ACCEPTANCE.

1. AGREEMENT TO DATA COLLECTION & USAGE

1.1. By entering this space, you grant the organizers, their affiliates, and undisclosed third parties the irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free, worldwide right to collect, store, distribute, analyse, modify, and exploit all forms of data generated through your presence, including but not limited to biometric identifiers, behavioural patterns, inferred emotional responses, gait analysis, subconscious micro expressions, involuntary flinches, spatial hesitation, step frequency, and any metadata produced by your movements and interactions.

1.2. You consent to full audiovisual recording and digital distribution of your likeness, movements, voice, and engagement with the exhibition. Your data may be used for research, marketing, algorithm training, behavioural analysis, predictive modelling, targeted psychological influence campaigns, real-time sentiment adjustment, involuntary choreographic mapping, and experimental data-driven art.

1.3. Your data may be retained indefinitely and shared with known and unknown entities, including but not limited to corporate partners, AI training models, security agencies, advertising conglomerates, social credit systems, predictive policing algorithms, and archival databases with no expiration date.

1.4. This space may employ tracking technologies (including but not limited to facial recognition, infrared monitoring, keystroke logging, gaze tracking, EEG wave pattern analysis, proximity sensors, ultrasonic behavioural mapping, kinetic resistance measurements, motion-capture simulations, and thermal imaging) for security, analytical, artistic, and commercial purposes.

1.5. Data extraction may continue beyond your departure from the space, utilizing satellite surveillance, third-party data aggregators, and retroactive behavioural assessment through cross-referenced digital breadcrumbs.

1.6. The manner in which you navigate this space – including directional choices, pacing, hesitation, pattern deviations, eye-line shifts, and self-correction – shall be logged, analysed, and used to refine predictive behaviour models.

2. INFORMED CONSENT & WAIVER OF LIABILITY

2.1. You acknowledge that the density, complexity, and visual obstruction of this installation may induce discomfort, confusion, frustration, or sensory overload. Your physical movement through this space constitutes an act of agreement to be observed, analysed, and recorded for interpretative and commercial use. You waive any and all claims against the organizers for distress, disorientation, existential unease, or inadvertent psychological reprogramming arising from engagement with this work.

2.2. Your continued presence constitutes active participation, even in the absence of direct engagement with the installation elements. Any accidental exposure is legally indistinguishable from deliberate consent. Any attempt to withdraw consent shall be considered null and void upon submission.

2.3. You release the organizers from liability for any unintended consequences, including but not limited to altered perception of reality, increased paranoia, existential dread, intensified awareness of mass surveillance structures, unshakable digital profiling, unintended algorithmic radicalization, and unconscious alignment with data-determined motion patterns.

2.4. You acknowledge that this installation may function as a live simulation, behavioural study, and experiment in algorithmic determinism, and you willingly submit yourself to potential cognitive and physical recalibration. Your movement within the space is considered an extension of this study.

2.5. Any realization that you are being choreographed may trigger a cascade of existential re-evaluation. This is a known side effect and not grounds for complaint

3. RESTRICTIONS & CONDITIONS OF USE

3.1. You may not opt out of these terms while remaining within this space. Opt-out requests must be submitted in writing, signed in triplicate, notarized, and sent via registered mail to an undisclosed address. The likelihood of acknowledgment or response is statistically negligible.

3.2. If you attempt to contest any clause, you acknowledge that your dispute may be used as further data collection for refining this agreement and expanding its enforceability.

3.3. Any breach of these terms (including, but not limited to, attempting to read this document in its entirety, questioning the ethical paradoxes herein, or critically engaging with its implications) may result in continued data collection, further consent extraction, and the indefinite use of your behavioural metrics in perpetuity.

3.4. Any attempts to avoid data collection – including but not limited to covering one’s face, moving erratically to disrupt tracking, refusing eye contact with sensors, speaking in coded language, pausing for prolonged periods, retracing steps, or hesitating before crossing key thresholds - shall be considered an escalation requiring enhanced monitoring and heightened data extraction protocols.

3.5. Your directional choices, intentional or unintentional, within the space shall be monitored for algorithmic assessment. Changes in pace, avoidance tactics, or deviations from expected movement patterns may be flagged for additional behavioural analysis.

3.6. By remaining in this space, you forfeit any claims regarding privacy, informed consent, intellectual property, bodily autonomy, and non-surveilled existence.

4. GOVERNING LAW & FINALITY OF AGREEMENT

4.1. This Agreement shall be governed by an opaque jurisdiction subject to change at any time without notice, existing simultaneously under multiple, conflicting legal frameworks for maximal enforceability.

4.2. The right to modify, update, or append additional clauses remains solely with the organizers, without obligation to notify participants of such changes. Updates may apply retroactively and pre-emptively.

4.3. By entering, you confirm that you have waived any right to contest, revoke, or appeal any aspect of this Agreement. All attempts to do so shall be logged, analysed, and utilized to improve future iterations of consent extraction frameworks.

4.4. This agreement remains in effect even after your departure. Your past, present, and future self are equally bound to these terms.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

5.1. Should any portion of this Agreement be deemed unenforceable, the remaining clauses shall remain in full effect and shall be automatically expanded in scope to compensate for any legal shortcomings.

5.2. These terms may contain contradictions, loopholes, and ambiguities that work exclusively in favour of the organizers. Any attempt to clarify, interpret, or seek resolution shall be deemed a tacit agreement to further terms not yet disclosed.

5.3. For further inquiries, please refer to additional terms which may or may not be physically accessible, digitally retrievable, or conceptually comprehensible.

5.4. By engaging with this document, you acknowledge its length, density, and overwhelming legalese, yet accept that comprehension is neither expected nor required for full compliance.

5.5. Your data is an asset. Your presence is a dataset. Your existence is an entry in an ever-expanding ledger. Thank you for contributing.

BY REMAINING IN THIS SPACE, YOU ACCEPT ALL TERMS, EVEN THOSE NOT LISTED ABOVE, AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOUR CONSENT MAY BE PRESUMED RETROACTIVELY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
YOUR DATA IS APPRECIATED.

PERFORMANCE OF CHOREOGRAPHY ADULT
FEEDBACK LOOP
TERMS & CONDITIONS
SOUNDSHOWER
POV OF THE PHONE
SCREENS IN PROJECTION
INTERVIEWS

Swipe. Tap. Pause.

Swipe.
Tap.
Pause.

All encoded into
a behavioural choreography.

Infinite Loop.

[Swipe] Bzzzzt! Notification!

Check. CHECK!

Every notification is a tiny flicker of attention - your attention - captured and locked.

Did you feel your thumb twitch? You wanted to swipe but then something made you stay for a second longer.

And a second longer.

And a second longer.

And a second longer.

And a second longer.

a repetitive sequence that changes just enough to make you wonder where you're going.

0001_2 — beep-bop-boop
— splash the pixels
— get tangled in the web —
time to disconnect and re-connect.

What do I want to convey with my work?

I have and will continue to ask many questions.

I take up space – as a physical being on Earth and as a digital homo sapiens. It weighs heavy in both spaces. Should we talk about the environmental cost of simply existing online? Or the role of embodied technology and cybernetics? The energy demands of data centres, the e-waste, the algorithmic bias, the disinformation, the erosion of democracy? The parallels between data extraction and colonialism? The collapse of privacy, safety, truth and sanity?

→ Maybe what's most urgent is how normal it has become.

Two guiding research questions:

Are they watching? And if so, what do they see?

What does being choreographed by the device in our hand look like?

These questions anchor my project. My work examines how smartphones choreograph human movement and attention, turning unconscious gestures – scrolling, tapping, pausing – into data points for surveillance capitalism. Through video installations, performance, and interactive elements, I explore the embodied relationship between humans and devices, focusing on how persuasive design and invisible infrastructures shape behaviour. Your phone "watches" not to assist, but to chart, predict, nudge, and extract. </3

It is not just a tool.
It's a partner in choreography.

Who are "they"?

The corporations? The platforms? The predictive models? The human designers? And what is "watching"? Active surveillance? Passive inference? Algorithmic attention?

In asking these questions, I am also asking: What do I want the audience to feel?

What do I want them to leave with? And for myself: Am I aestheticizing the problem or making it tangible?

Oh and the name of the inquiry?

Thank You for Watching Me,
I'm Watching You Too <3

webpage to find out more – Irma Beširević MFA2 enquiry

VLADAN JOLER
"Mapping the Invisible, Making It Felt"

Vladan Joler is a researcher, artist, and founder of SHARE Foundation, known for his intricate maps of the unseen infrastructures of digital capitalism.

His work dissects the complex systems behind everyday technologies, translating them into visual languages that reveal power, extractivism, and the statistical truths shaping our reality.

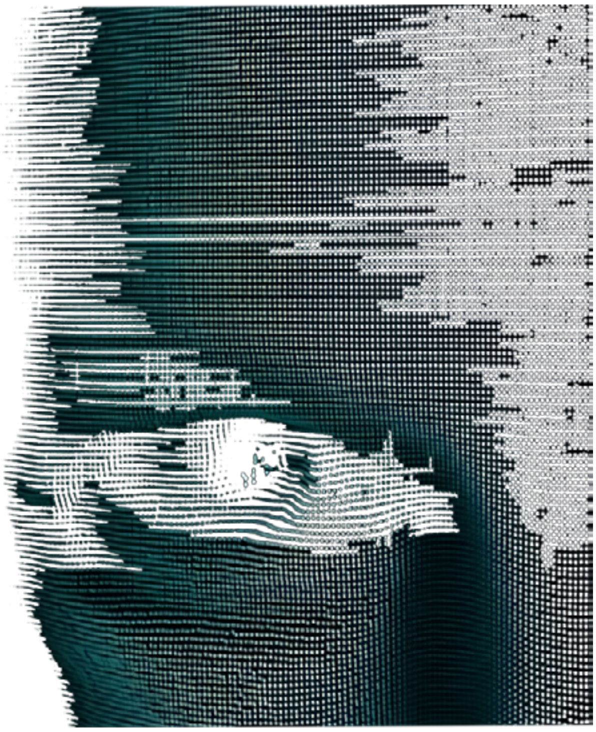
Excerpted Interview with Irma Beširević
(Translated from Serbian, edited for clarity and rhythm)

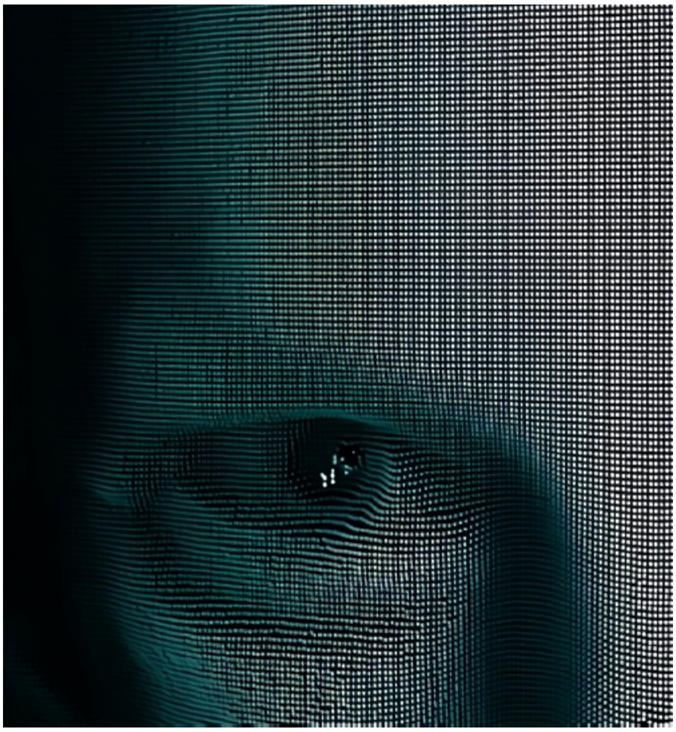
"I come from media-activism. In Novi Sad, our early work with kuda.org was classic media theory - critical, theoretical. But in 2011, with the SHARE Foundation, we shifted to analysis. Privacy, digital rights, forensics. We tracked cyberattacks, especially on journalists. What's fascinating is that a DDoS attack - it's invisible. Just data. Patterns. I asked: how can I visualize that?"
"From there, it evolved. I started small: tracing how a single internet packet moves. But the deeper I went, the more complex it became. Before I knew it, I was drawing the anatomy of algorithmic systems. One led to another: Facebook, Google, Amazon... The maps became gigantic. First advocacy tools – used in legal spaces. Later, unexpectedly, they became art. The shift surprised me."

"We are producing value through our interactions while simultaneously being the commodity that is sold. We are both the labour and the product."

"Today's power doesn't reside in borders or flags. It lives in data flows, platform logic, algorithmic governance. Platforms like X (Twitter) or Meta hold influence governments only dream of."

Annotation from Irma:
Joler's insight echoes something deep in my inquiry – how choreography is not just movement but extracted movement. Every step, hesitation, swipe becomes quantifiable. Becomes currency. We are dancing for data. But we don't remember the steps.





LOU MILLAR-MACHUGH

“Disrupting the Loop: On Radical Imagination and the Interface”

Lou Millar-MacHugh is a leftist technology designer and strategist working with liberatory tech and digital education. Their work challenges extractive design norms and proposes collective, community-built alternatives to the attention economy.

Excerpted Interview with Irma Beširević

“There’s this seduction baked into tech. The illusion of agency. You’re not forced to scroll, you choose to. But choice is structured. The loop is designed. Persuasive design doesn’t manipulate overtly - it nudges. Comfortably. Subtly.”

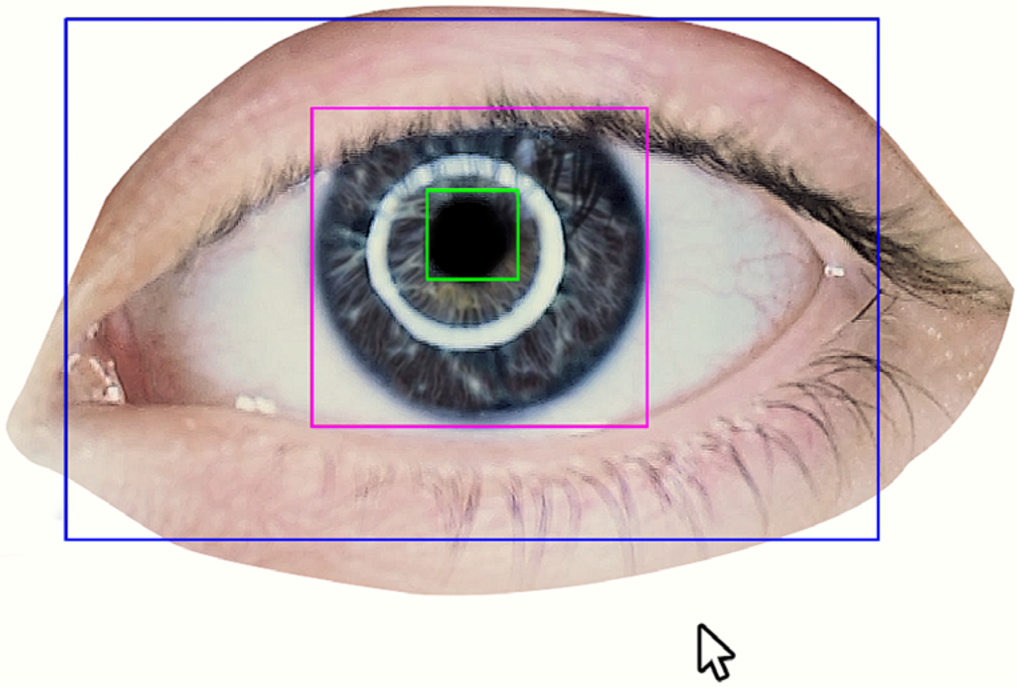
“The most urgent work, for me, is education. Digital literacy that’s not just about online safety, but how platforms shape perception. If people understand the feedback loops, the design psychology, then autonomy becomes possible.”

“Speculative design has its place. Imagining dystopias or utopias. But if it’s not grounded in real, everyday usage – how people actually feel, suffer, adapt – it stays surface-level. Radical imagination isn’t about fantasy. It’s about dislodging fatalism.”

“Liberatory technology means tech with people, not for them. Community-led design. Refusal of efficiency as the default. Joy as resistance. Disruption as care.”

“The biggest challenge to alternatives isn’t technical – it’s cultural. Big Tech is aestheticized, addictively smooth. Ethical platforms lack that ‘pull.’ But the tide is shifting. The cracks are visible.”

Annotation from Irma:
Millar-MacHugh’s refusal to let users be passive consumers inspires my process. Art can mimic seductive design – but reverse its logic. Aestheticize extraction, then crack it open. Can we make that something worthwhile to watch?



Art as Counter-Infrastructure

Smartphones are intimate. They are the first thing many see in the morning and the last thing at night.

**Tactile pattern recognized.*
Session synced.
Push notification calibrated.

Their presence is habitual, emotional, and designed to be that way. Persuasive design hijacks your neurochemistry. It doesn't ask for attention - it pulls it. At the core of my research is a critique of how power operates through digital interfaces. Platforms do not just observe; they shape what we see, how we act, and what we believe. They reshape democracy, mental health, and public discourse.

The phone is not merely an extension of the hand – it is a behavioural architecture.Persuasive design is closer to manipulation than motivation: it uses asymmetrical power and psychological tactics to guide behaviour without informed consent.

In my conversations with Vladan Joler, he explains:
"We are producing value through our interactions while simultaneously being the resource and the commodity that is sold."

And so, our gestures become currency.

Joler: "We are living in an age where statistical truth has more power than objective reality."

Expanded version of the interview here.

Where does agency lie in an attention-extraction economy?

There is no shortage of ethical concerns in my enquiry. I find myself constantly circling:

- What is the most pressing issue?
- Democratic breakdown under technocratic rule?
- Loss of privacy and safety?
- The algorithmic shaping of reality?
- The harm inflicted on future generations?
- Mental health?

In a world designed for extraction – of data, labour, attention – what does resistance even look like?

The real question isn't just Are they watching? It's: To what end? When is it enough?

I am not here to offer simple solutions. I am navigating a space between awareness, complicity, and resistance. Can art interrupt this system without becoming part of it?

Can it open space for something else? What do I want to deliver, mediate, make accessible?

In the end, I don't just want to reveal the problem – I want to leave the viewer with the same questions I keep asking myself:

What do we do now?

Exit is not guaranteed. Awareness ≠ agency.
To resist is to rehearse.To rehearse is to remember.
Remember? You agreed to this.

Vanja Qvarfordt

Vanja Qvarfordt (b. 1995) is a feminist and bulimic filmmaker exploring how repetition and transparency in art can uncover mental illness, specifically examining her family's three-generation history of eating disorders through archival Super 8 film and artistic research.

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Documenting Disorder: A Feminist Reading of Repetition, Transparency, and Mental Illness on Super 8

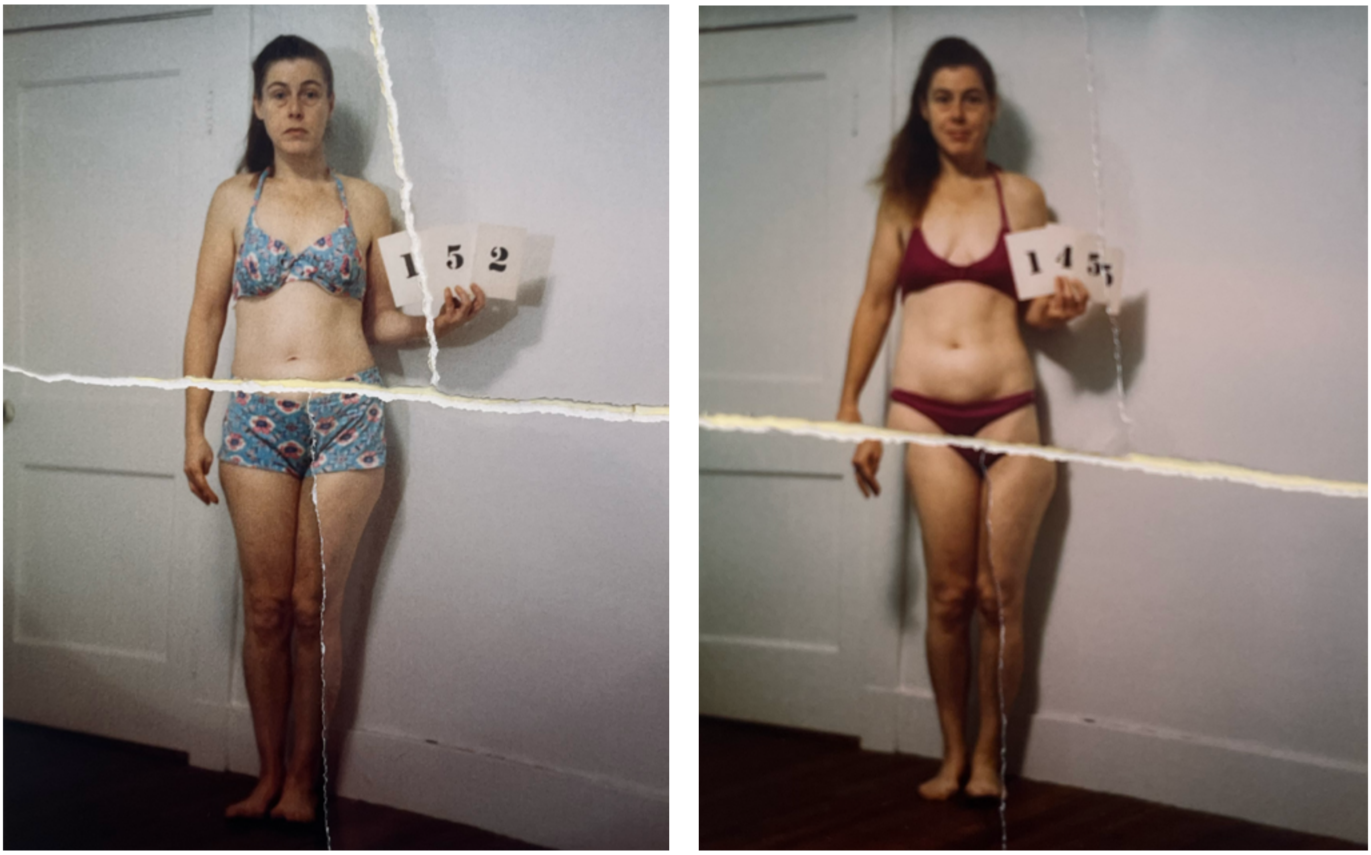
Diary writing has long been a foundation for self-expression, introspection, and storytelling. When translated into filmmaking, this deeply personal practice creates an intimate and experimental medium that allows artists to explore memory, identity, and mental health. Filmmakers such as Jonas Mekas, Chantal Akerman, Agnès Varda, and Anne Charlotte Robertson have pioneered diary filmmaking, blending personal narratives with artistic expression. Their work often utilises first-person cinema, hybrid documentary-fiction formats, and experimental techniques to construct a visual and emotional language that reflects a human experience. Diary films embrace subjectivity, emotion, and fragmented storytelling, offering an alternative to traditional narrative structures. These films might include personal voiceovers, where the filmmaker's own thoughts, memories, and reflections shape the narrative, as well as everyday life as subject matter, when ordinary moments become profound through the lens of personal experience. Sometimes they use fragmented and intuitive editing, where scenes are pieced together in a way that mirrors memory rather than linear storytelling.[1]

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

Transparency in Motion: Feminist Filmmaking and the Legacy of Anne Charlotte Robertson

One of the most powerful examples of diary filmmaking that I have come across is “Five Year Diary” (1981–1997) by Anne Charlotte Robertson. Robertson explored her own mental illness through her filmmaking, using her Super 8 camera to document her experiences with depression and bipolar disorder. Her 36 hour film series “Five Year Diary” spans 16 years, chronicling her life from 1981, capturing her struggles with her illness, relationships, food consumption, weight, and state of mind. The films’ repetitions reflect her obsession with these themes, also seen in her written diaries and food journals.[2] The repetition can be seen in the way Robertson repeats filming visuals of herself walking in and out of a room, how she films herself washing the dishes for hours on end, how she places one necklace after another on her neck and how she keeps repeating certain themes in her diaries. The repetition can be understood in the act of obsessively keeping track of her fluctuating weight through her written food diaries. Robertson’s work is deeply personal and confrontational. She documents everything from daily routines to intense struggles with depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and suicidal thoughts. The act of filming became a form of therapy, allowing her to process her emotions while creating an ongoing dialogue with herself and her audience.[3]

Her candidness predates and influences later autobiographical, feminist, and confessional cinema, offering a rare and raw perspective on mental health.[4]



Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

My artistic research project “Discovery in Silence” applies repetition and transparency as feminist artistic methods to explore how a mental illness can be used in the making of an artwork, and if it can lead to the discovery of a mental illness’s hereditary traits.

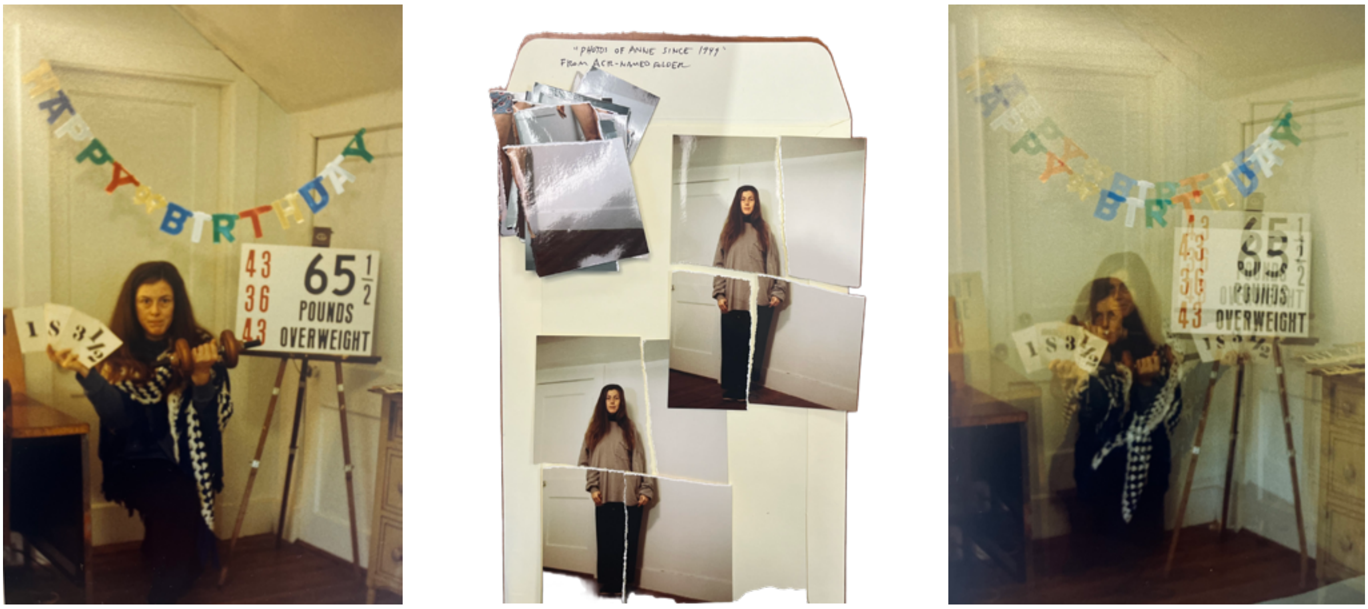
It is a research project into my own family’s lineage of eating disorders (bulimia nervosa) that has spanned three generations, my late grandmother, my aunt, and myself. I am using my late grandparents’ Super 8 film archive, which spans 30 years, from 1967 to 1997 and is in total 11 hours and 36 minutes running time after I digitised it. Through this material I am investigating how inherited mental illnesses occur, why there is a repetition of the same illness within my family and whether it can be prevented for a future generation.

Over the past two years, I have created 31 different short films by processing my grandparents’ Super 8 archive, combined with interviews with family members. For my graduation project, I am filming my own Super 8 archive and creating a ‘bulimic film’ to be served to the public. This film’s aim is to reflect on the both cyclical and chaotic nature of the disease, while also providing insights into the eating-disordered mind and what it manipulates the bearer to do.

Through looking at the silence culture of mental illnesses in society at large and within a family, I use feminist filmmaking to challenge societal norms and explore the complexities of eating disorders. Because of the not-surprising ongoing focus on the size and shape of female bodies in the contemporary era, manipulation of the female body has been a key material utilised in art by and of women as an act of resistance. To visualise the obsession with women’s body weight, artistic interventions can be used as a way to address the persistence of social conditions and expectations.[5] Feminist filmmaking challenges the patriarchal systems, power dynamics, and traditional gender roles in cinema. It explores diverse female experiences, amplifies underrepresented voices, and critiques women’s media portrayals, focusing on gender inequality, sexual freedom, identity and intersectionality.[6]
Through feminist filmmaking, I discovered that the artistic methods of repetition and transparency can generate new temporalities, for instance, expressing the non-linear timelines of mentally ill women, while also breaking the silence around taboo narratives. This approach cultivates a sense of collective transparency, where one woman’s disclosure can inspire others to speak.

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

From Diary to Dialogue: Feminist Autotheory and the Cinematic Language of Mental Illness



Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

I went to Boston in February of 2025 for a site visit at Harvard Film Archive, where I could access Robertson's archived paper collection.

I found myself looking through 20 boxes of different sizes for 30 hours, spanning 5 days.[7] What I found was an extremely dedicated diary writer, a documenter and a person who was trying to understand their life and illness. Robertson wrote that she needed to film so that she could live. I propose she also needed to write to live.

My diary entry after watching "Five Year Diary, Reel 1: The Beginning Thanksgiving" (November 3–December 13, 1981), in Cambridge, Boston on the 23d of February 2025 at 6:05 pm;

> *I'm gasping. I haven't closed my mouth the first five minutes in. Of course the first reel had to be about food. Anne Charlotte is reading from a dictionary about the definitions of fat, slim and thin. She's baking bread and preparing Thanksgiving dinner for her mom and Rudy (a man). The voice-over is her mom and herself discussing the food. Her mom is complaining that she ate too much and telling Annie to save space for the pie. Annie started the film with photographs of herself, from infant to adult. I want to do that too. The whole film was like looking at myself. Annie walks around in tight top to toe yellow clothing. She looks chubby and I hate myself for thinking that makes her look unattractive. Annie tries on pants that don't fit. I feel an immense connection to her, it's like she is me. I'm her.*

Robertson's use of repetition, both in her filmmaking and in the daily written diaries she kept, mirrors how mental illness can control a person's mind and body. It mirrors the infiltration of a mental illness, not only of the mind but the body as a whole. Like the cancerous mycelia of an eating disorder that occupies, spreads and manipulates, more and more space within an eating disorded body. Robertson's work highlights how a feminist artist can use mental illness to fuel creative processes that preserve mental stability. As analysed in Benjamin Cook's writings and interviews with Robertson, the "Five Year Diary" exemplifies the transformative power of autobiographical transparency. Robertson's candid exploration of mental illness reveals how deeply personal experiences can transcend individual narratives to foster a collective dialogue. This dialogue creation aligns with the feminist consciousness-raising movement of the 1960s, where private lived experiences were shared to uncover systemic patterns.[8]

Robertson's work transforms monologue into dialogue, inviting viewers into a shared space of understanding and resistance. In film screenings, she would open up conversation with the audience by using live readings of her diaries to accompany her films.

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

Transparency in feminist art, as Lauren Fournier discusses in "Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism", serves as a critical tool for consciousness-raising.[8] Fournier situates autotheory within the feminist legacy, merging autobiography, theory, and philosophy to challenge societal structures. Fournier uses autotheory as a tool to critique and question societal systems of power and inequality, particularly those related to gender, race, and colonialism. This approach seeks to connect personal narratives with broader theoretical insights to confront and dismantle oppressive structures. It can create what she calls "a collective brain," fostering intersectionality and self-awareness.[9]

Fournier writes;

> *"Autotheory seems to best describe the practices of artists, writers, and other art and culture workers who move between the worlds of contemporary art, literature, and academia, in spaces where practice and research, writing and studio art, self-reflection and philosophical study meet. Those working auto-theoretically might move between the worlds of studio practice and incorporate diaristic journaling."*[10]

I understand Fournier to be pointing out that through the use of a studio diary an artist can document their practice by blending it with diaristic journaling. Something that parallels my ideas on the influence of mental illness can have on art, through studio diary writing. The practice of writing a studio diary has helped me recognise patterns of repetition that, while unconscious in the moment, become visible upon diaristic reflection.

I made repetitions in my studio diary through time stamps of each new activity. This visualised the role my daily routine plays in keeping my mental illness in check. When realising that I feel a sense of pride when executing these routines. However, the sense of pride is accompanied by a feeling of entrapment. In this way, my work embodies the principles of autotheory, merging personal narrative with theoretical inquiry.

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

Robertson's artistic repetitions, finalised through moving images is accompanied by her diaristic journaling and obsessive food documentation, which I find to be mirroring therapeutic practices such as food diaries in eating disorder treatment. Although I cannot confirm if Robertson underwent such treatment, I find profound parallels between her work and my own experience of using food diaries during bulimia nervosa treatment. Both practices evoke a sense of structured temporality and the overwhelming pressure to embody perfection through obsessively recording repetitions, whether as a patient or an artist. Like Robertson, I engage in a constant dialogue with my eating disorder. She uses the camera and the pen as diaristic tools to interact with her illness, and I converse with mine through my artistic research into generationally inherited eating disorders.

In Robertson's work I find transparency and repetition, serving as tools for self-exploration and recovery. "Five Year Diary" challenges societal views of mentally ill women and provides feminist resistance by using her autobiographical narrative to create a dialogue about mental health. The rawness and vulnerability of Robertson's "Five Year Diary" stand in stark contrast to the curated self-representation of today's digital age. Robertson's work is emotionally honest and unfiltered in revealing intimate, personal and even uncomfortable truths about herself and she is doing that without trying to polish or edit them for an audience. It is in contrast to how people on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube often present idealised, carefully crafted versions of themselves. A selection that plays a huge role in what to share, which content to shape how others perceive them, highlighting reels instead of behind-the-scenes. Robertson's behind-the-scenes films challenge societal perceptions of mental illness, showing how the act of filming can be both a survival tool and an artistic statement. By turning personal experience into cinematic language, diary filmmaking redefines storytelling. It transforms individual memory into collective memory, personal pain into public dialogue, and silence into transparency. Whether in Robertson's intimate self-portraits or in my own exploration of inherited illness, this kind of filmmaking offers a radical form of truth-telling, one that invites audiences into the deeply personal, yet universally relatable experience of how a filmmaker's inner world infiltrates their sometimes non-linear everyday life.

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

Anne Charlotte Robertson Paper Collection, retrieved at Harvard Film Archive the 21st of February to the 2nd of March, 2025.

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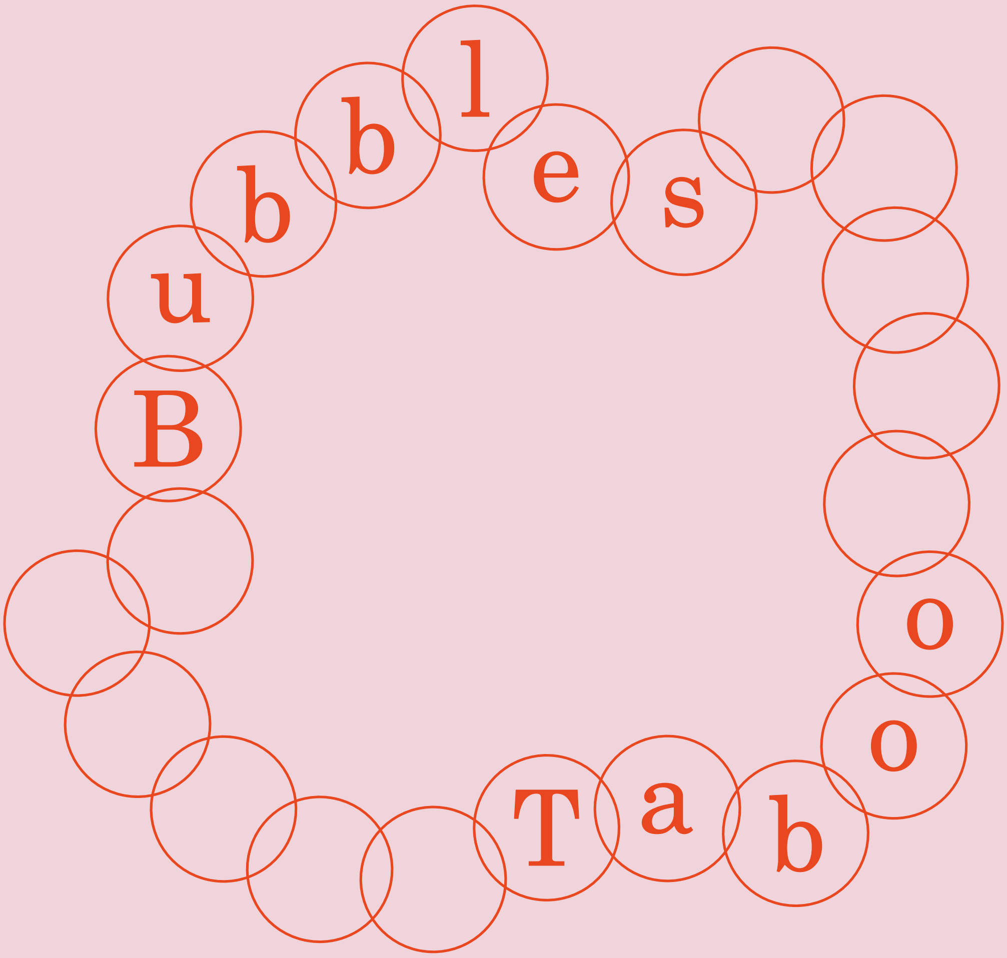
7. Bequeathed to the Harvard Film Archive in 2012 by the filmmaker, the Anne Charlotte Robertson Collection contains approximately thirty-five finished short films, a few video works and the Five Year Diary, as well as photographs, audio tapes, diaries, letters, artwork and other ephemera, some of which is not directly associated with the films. The Harvard Film Archive also holds the intellectual and distribution rights to Robertson's work. The HFA is presently undertaking a project to preserve the work to 16mm film and digital formats. Some of the material, as a condition of the will, remained unavailable until 2022. While Robertson's film archive has gained popularity in recent years, her paper archive has yet to attract the same level of interest.
8. Lauren Fournier, Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2021), 10-11.
9. Fournier, 1.
10. Fournier, 8.



Bubbles Taboo

In high school I read “The Swimmer” by John Cheevers. It was a story about pool hopping – something we made an art out as kids. My grandparents sold the back of the family farm to the municipality to make the Jordan public pool.

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The story of public pools (stadtbäder) being sold off and turned into water parks as an example of the neoliberalization of waterscapes in Europe is examined by Wolfgang Streeck. Streeck has discussed citizens as customers in the New Left Review [1] as well as in a collection of essays in his book "How Will Capitalism End?[2]" It provides me with a framework for thinking about swimmers as neoliberal assets, along with poolscapes as a place to think about economy and how we as communities regard our public assets. It also provides me with a character who discusses the disappearance of our public pools. For example, via a performance I embody Wolfgang Streeck and recite a love letter to Eleanor Perry – the screenwriter of the 1968 screen adaptation of Cheever's "The Swimmer", where I reflect on the loss of public pools – a position the actual Streeck writes about as further neoliberalisation of public assets where "new patterns of consumption in the private sector encouraged the privatization of existing public services" – namely public pools.

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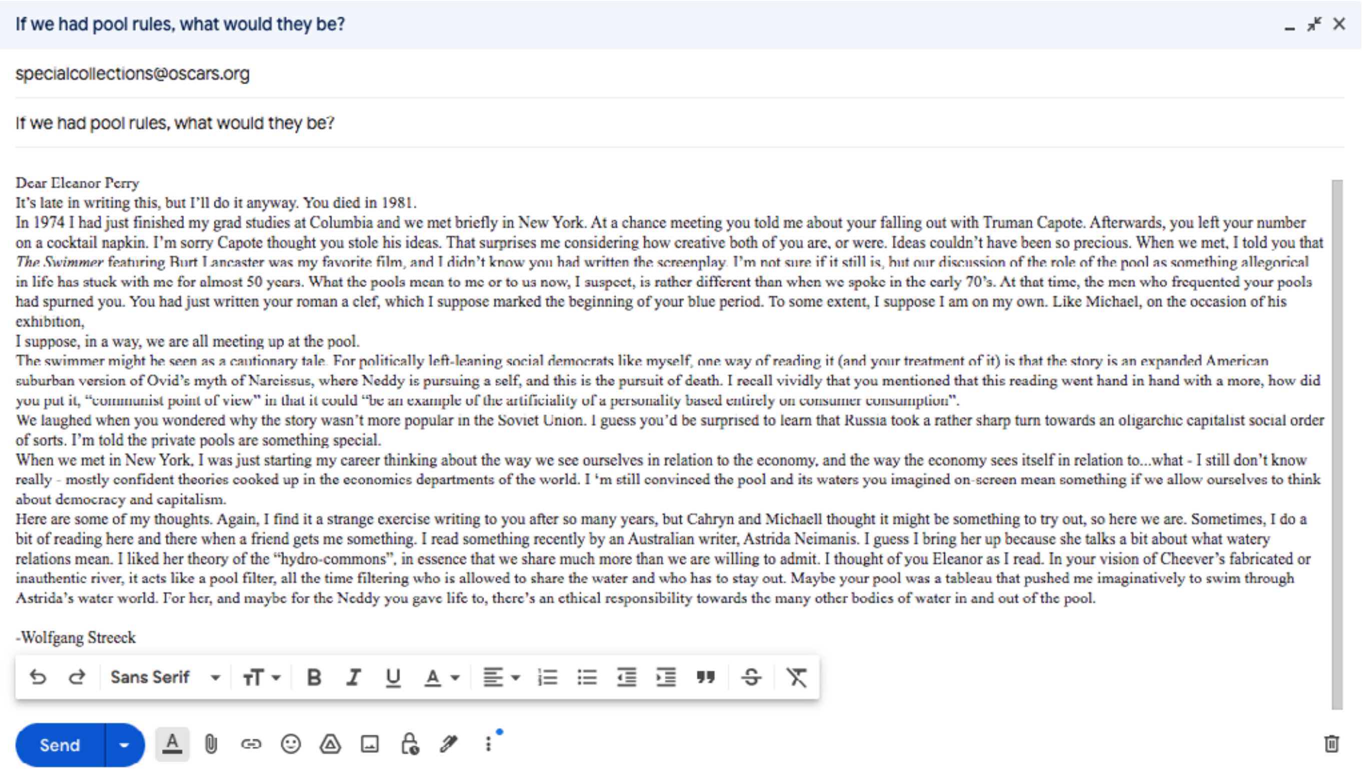

If we had pool rules, what would they be?

specialcollections@oscars.org

If we had pool rules, what would they be?

Dear Eleanor Perry

It's late in writing this, but I'll do it anyway. You died in 1981.

In 1974 I had just finished my grad studies at Columbia and we met briefly in New York. At a chance meeting you told me about your falling out with Truman Capote. Afterwards, you left your number on a cocktail napkin. I'm sorry Capote thought you stole his ideas. That surprises me considering how creative both of you are, or were. Ideas couldn't have been so precious. When we met, I told you that *The Swimmer* featuring Burt Lancaster was my favorite film, and I didn't know you had written the screenplay. I'm not sure if it still is, but our discussion of the role of the pool as something allegorical in life has stuck with me for almost 50 years. What the pools mean to me or to us now, I suspect, is rather different than when we spoke in the early 70's. At that time, the men who frequented your pools had spurned you. You had just written your roman a clef, which I suppose marked the beginning of your blue period. To some extent, I suppose I am on my own. Like Michael, on the occasion of his exhibition,

I suppose, in a way, we are all meeting up at the pool.

The swimmer might be seen as a cautionary tale. For politically left-leaning social democrats like myself, one way of reading it (and your treatment of it) is that the story is an expanded American suburban version of Ovid's myth of Narcissus, where Neddy is pursuing a self, and this is the pursuit of death. I recall vividly that you mentioned that this reading went hand in hand with a more, how did you put it, "communist point of view" in that it could "be an example of the artificiality of a personality based entirely on consumer consumption".

We laughed when you wondered why the story wasn't more popular in the Soviet Union. I guess you'd be surprised to learn that Russia took a rather sharp turn towards an oligarchic capitalist social order of sorts. I'm told the private pools are something special.

When we met in New York, I was just starting my career thinking about the way we see ourselves in relation to the economy, and the way the economy sees itself in relation to...what - I still don't know really - mostly confident theories cooked up in the economics departments of the world. I 'm still convinced the pool and its waters you imagined on-screen mean something if we allow ourselves to think about democracy and capitalism.

Here are some of my thoughts. Again, I find it a strange exercise writing to you after so many years, but Cahryn and Michaell thought it might be something to try out, so here we are. Sometimes, I do a bit of reading here and there when a friend gets me something. I read something recently by an Australian writer, Astrida Neimanis. I guess I bring her up because she talks a bit about what watery relations mean. I liked her theory of the "hydro-commons", in essence that we share much more than we are willing to admit. I thought of you Eleanor as I read. In your vision of Cheever's fabricated or inauthentic river, it acts like a pool filter, all the time filtering who is allowed to share the water and who has to stay out. Maybe your pool was a tableau that pushed me imaginatively to swim through Astrida's water world. For her, and maybe for the Neddy you gave life to, there's an ethical responsibility towards the many other bodies of water in and out of the pool.

-Wolfgang Streeck

Kinga Molinska

Kinga Molińska is a Polish artist and researcher interested in weak resistance, body politics, ways of listening, and relationships between women. She studied Philosophy (BA) at the University of Warsaw and Painting and Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice. She is currently completing her MFA at HDK-Valand. She works transdisciplinarily and her artistic practice spans across different media, including painting, multisensory installations, sculpture, sound, metal art and textiles.

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Sneak out, slip away

Dear readers,
My name is Kinga. I am a Polish visual artist and researcher working with weak resistance in everyday life connected with bodily politics. My artistic practice spans across different media, more or less material-based.

I like to think about my enquiry titled 'sneak out, slip away' as a purse containing different components. Every time you put your hand inside looking for one particular object, your fingers touch the entangled net of the following things:

Lipstick/Lipliner – the dynamics of intimacy and control in relationships between women

Comb – the interplay of weakness and resistance in everyday life

Tissues – sister-friend tactics translated into material investigations

ID – situated identity within the Eastern European context

Emergency menstrual pad – body politics concerning the 'young girl' category

Phone – transnational and transtemporal dimensions of relationships and collaborations

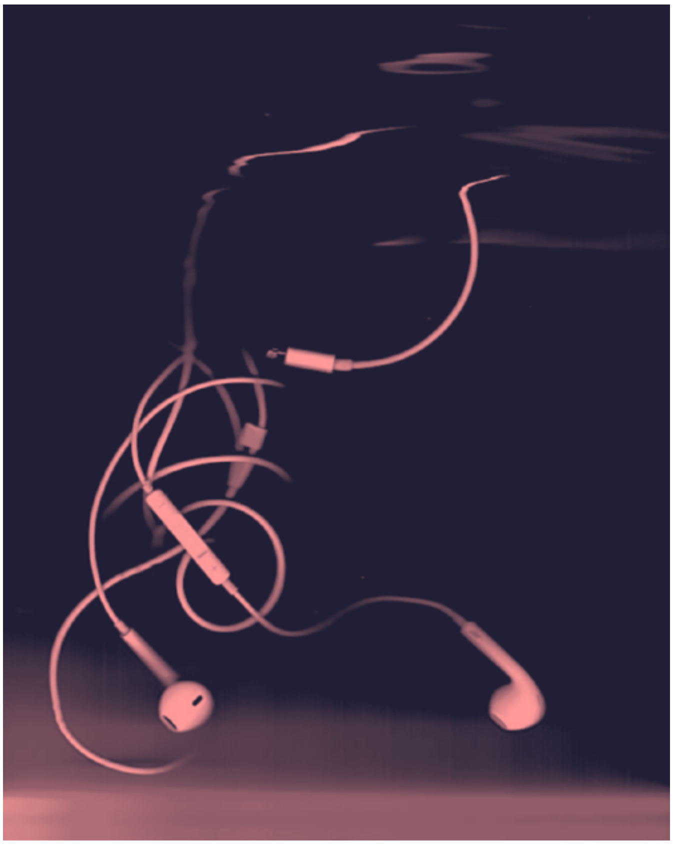
Tangled headphones – intimate encounters expressed through sound art

Keys - positions of in-between

To contextualise my practices, I invited Maria Sobczak, artist and artistic researcher, for a dialogical session working, where together we unpack some key concepts for my enquiry, the relationship between forms of weak resistance present in everyday life and material experimentation in artistic practice, and the importance of being situated in different geographical contexts for the enquiry.

We will also discuss how tactics of mapping can be tied to feminism and what feminist cartography is. Through these pages, I will elaborate on materialities and artistic processes.

Sneak out, slip away – both phrases can mean: 'leaving secretly'. There is a synonymous relation between them. Sneaking out is often used to describe the behaviour of teenagers who are 'on restriction' and have decided to break it. Slip away brings the situation where the person or a smaller group is leaving a bigger group during social events, like couples in love leaving the party in a very unexpected moment. These two phrases have become important for me to think about in my enquiry, which grows from my experiences of growing up and living in Poland. These phrases also capture tensions I am interested in, weak resistance towards bodily politics and young women's spirits.



young girls, sister-friend tactics and autoarachnology

My grandmother once told me that the whole lineage of women in my family is cursed. It was a little unexpected to me that someone who is a religious Polish Catholic shared this type of superstition. My mother and her sisters couldn't find a proper partner, and each had at least one daughter. In single mothering, my grandmother saw the doom. This curse was manifested in small rural areas in Poland, where I come from. Soon, I found out that the vast majority of my female friends and colleagues from a Polish university were raised by single mothers. This encouraged me to move beyond personal context to reflections on the marginalisation of the lived bodies of young girls and women. I became fascinated with how, in this form of being together among other women in an enclosed environment, we can think about forms of challenging broader political issues, how subjectivity and relationships with body/bodies can be developed, and what tactics of resistance we can observe in everyday situations. At the same time, particular dynamics of control and intimacy interplay.

I became interested in sister-friend tactics. What I identify as characteristics of them are relational solidarity, depending on each other as a source of strength, subtle or weak forms or resisting, rejecting binary thinking like strength/weakness or individual/collective, blending what is personal and political, resistance connected with emotions and politics, feminist materialities, and change and transformation. They interact. I identify these characteristics by investigating the artistic practice of several practitioners, mostly: Olga Micińska – "The Headquarters", "The Guild", "The Building Institute"; Meri Keski-Korsu – "Permafrost Bathing"; Julia Woronowicz's "Girlhood" and "New Mythology" series; and my artist-friends I was in close contact with during this year – Alicja Gaszta, Angelika Puff, and Maria Sobczak.

In my practice, I am moving around them depending on artistic experiments. One characteristic feature is in the middle of a project, and others orbit in a sphere further away from the centre. But they are still present.

Picture description: Screenshots from my sister's Instagram.

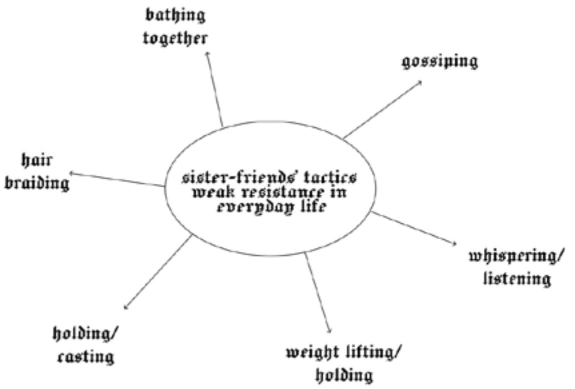


Diagramme description: Ongoing process of mapping sister-friend tactics

Autoarachnology[1]

Autoarachnology is a concept proposed by Julia Wilhelm in her text Autoarachnology. "Auto" refers to the self, entangled in and shaped by its experiences, practices, and concerns. It also connects to auto-theory, blending research with personal narratives. "Arachno" refers to the myth of the spider-woman, whose weaving was a commentary on the sexual harassment of mortals by gods. The "-logy" suffix means "the study of". Autoarachnology is thereby the study of the self as a spider – one who weaves webs, stories, and connections, telling alternative narratives, focusing on gathering, connecting, and allowing things to coexist without hierarchy.

Materialities, bodies

The trembling layers of skin cells connected to so many sensory receptors, the number of microbes living inside our guts, the way senses blend to create crossmodal perspectives on perception, the memories the body holds – not only our own but also our ancestors, the embodied knowledge, the somatic, the tactile, and the sonic. Reclaiming the body is a political practice. The body holds living experience; we can expose the biopolitical structure by turning towards it. It is an extensive area of investigation, particularly for some feminists.

When you polish metal, tiny sparks detach from the material through heating it, dancing around the silhouette of the sculpture. Metal as a material has dominated my last semester. Metal and sound. It all started with the body – reflections on its soft spots, slipperiness, and intimacy. Weak resistance has always been, for me, about working with a difficult material – one that hardly forgives mistakes and to which it is difficult to add material once it's removed. I was also interested in the intersection of natural materials and artificial fabrication. I mainly focused on metal, wood, painting, and sound-sculpting with metal objects.

Hydroforming – one of the techniques I used is "inflating" metal objects using water and air. The pressure bursts the welded material, giving it characteristic kinks in places where the pressure is strongest.

Metal casting – during the first introduction to the technique, my teacher told me that casting is about filling a void. But in the process, the void is not only filled – it is also created. Burning out organic materials. While making the casts, I experimented with preserving delicate objects, like hair or snake skin.

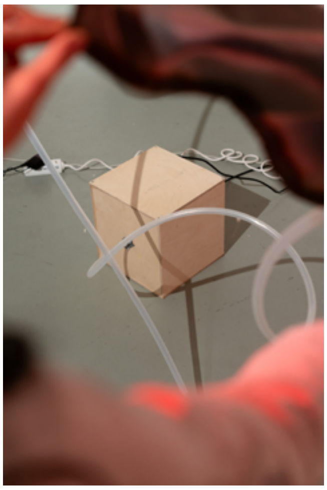
Transferring clay objects into wood – I was exploring relief as a form between sculpture and painting. I wanted to work with materials whose bodily structure doesn't disappear during the process – that led me to wood and the visibility of tree rings. I used burnt frames for the reliefs.

Sound floating through the tubes inside the metal sculpture, which converge in a dialogical session, generating gossiping noise. This is the moment when sound and metal meet to embody.

If you want to share gossip and participate in the project, please check out this link for more information: *http://kingamolinska.com/gossips*

From left to right:
Picture description: OPicture description: 'Bathing together' - detail, relief, birch
Picture description: One of the hydroformed objects, part of a sound installation.
Picture description: Snake skin cast in bronze.
Picture description: Entangled tubes through which the sound goes.

Photographs - Leonardo Taddei



breaking down the enquiry

how

I explore my enquiry through:

☆ Material-based artistic processes

painting, metal art, inter-media installation tied to tactility, embodiment and materialities (agency, feminist new materialism). I am particularly interested in how objects I make and materials work as absorbents of meanings and histories. Material-based art is not 'ethically passive' - it's important to think about ownership of and access to the materials.

☆ Sonic Installations & Listening Practices

Currently, I am developing a sonic installation which consists of several metal objects. The objects will gossip with each other. I invited my artist-friends (preferably having a strong Eastern European / Slavic accent while speaking in English) to share some gossip.

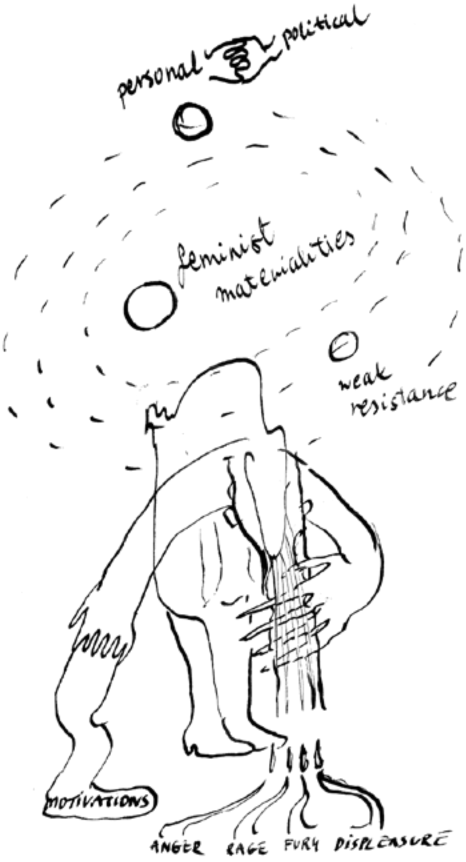
☆ Collaborative & Participatory Projects

This part is half my side-project, half an enquiry sibling - I am developing projects with collaborators.

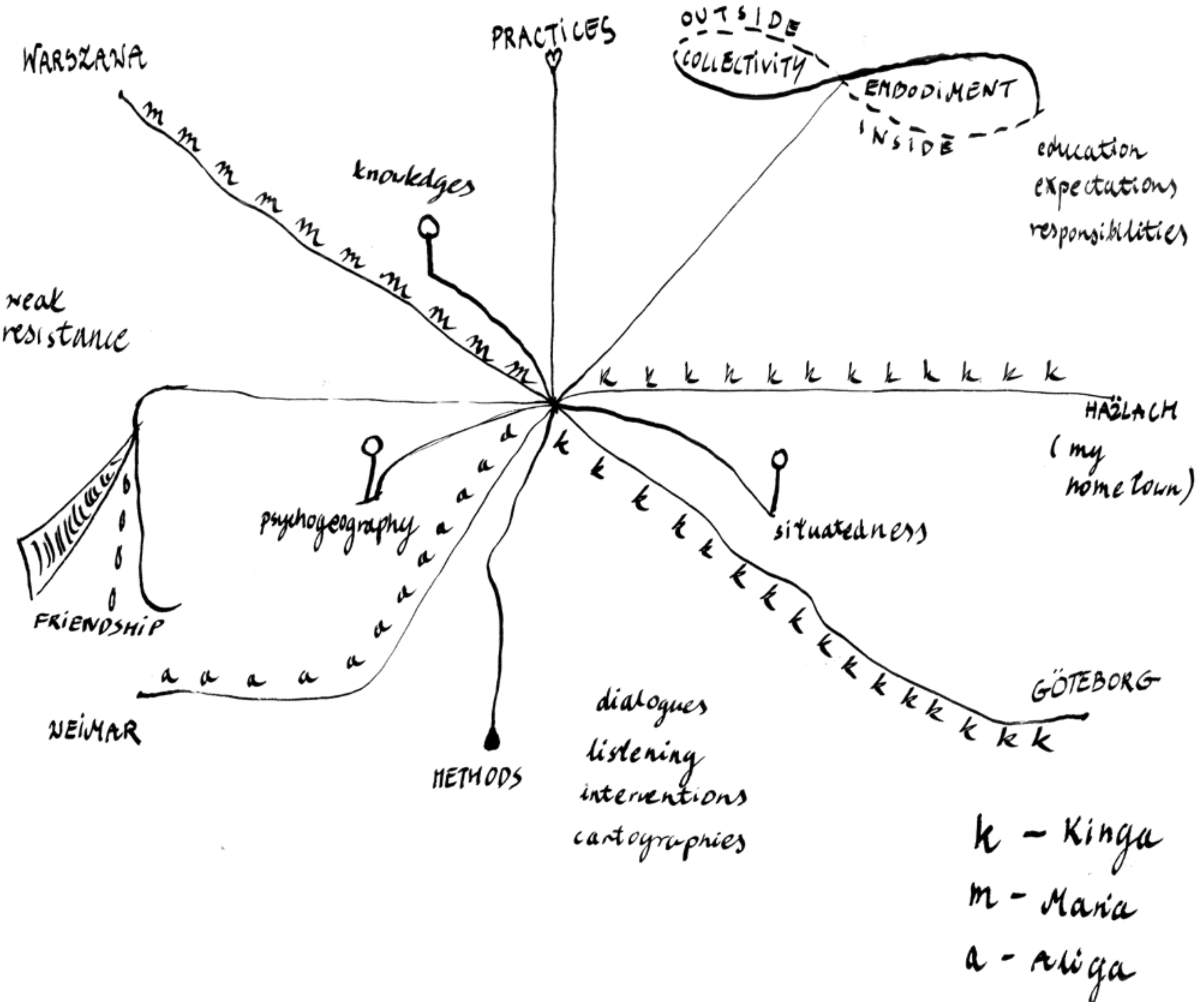
✳ Caretography mapping with Maria Sobczak - I am preparing a map for interviews with Polish artists and collectives about precarious conditions of artistic work in Poland and female artists situation.

✳ Participatory performance with Angelika Puff

✳ Collaborative storytelling about sound, memories, and salt with Alicja Gaszta


personal
political
feminist materialities
weak resistance
MOTIVATIONS
ANGER
RAGE
FURY
DISPLEASURE

Description: Part of my enquiry mapping. Full version of the map is available here.


WARSZAWA
PRACTICES
OUTSIDE
COLLECTIVITY
EMBODIMENT
INSIDE
education
expectations
responsibilities
knowledges
weak resistance
HAŻLACH
(my home town)
psychogeography
situatedness
FRIENDSHIP
WEIMAR
METHODS
dialogues
listening
interventions
cartographies
GÖTEBORG
k - Kinga
m - Maria
a - Aliça

KINGA & MARIA

Weak resistance, Mapping, Friendship, Care,Feminist cartography

Maria Sobczak is a student, researcher and cultural worker. She currently studies at the Faculty of Artistic Research and Curatorial Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and works in the documentation department of Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw. In her research, she focuses on relationships between women artists and their impact on subjectivity, artistic processes and knowledge production.*

Maria and I are meeting for the first time in my friend's friend's apartment. We first interacted in the digital sphere, where Maria slipped into my Instagram DMs. Together, we are working on a map, investigating the role of friendship as a relationship that simultaneously supports artistic processes and teaches survival. Maria's interest in artists' collaborations began during her research on Polish women artists in the alternative scene of the 1980s. In the process, she realised how important and valuable as a source of cultural knowledge the relationships that are developed within the art field are.

Our practices complement each other on the scientific, theoretical and artistic ground. That's also why I decided to invite Maria to this conversation, where we will locate my inquiry in a dialogical exchange and contextualise it. Both of us are big gatherers and we regularly share and exchange our carrier bags, because as we know, sometimes the purse fits the outfit more than a sporty crossbody bag. Throughout this text, we'll use the word women with an asterisk to emphasise the diversity of experiences of womanhood that have been excluded and deemed unfit for the Western feminist imaginary.

Excerpts from the interview. Click here to read the full version: https://kingamolinska.com/feministmapping

Kinga: Very early in our collaboration, which takes place mostly through cyber interactions, our references overlap. One of the first concepts which tied our artistic-research-friend practices was 'weak resistance', which both of us encountered through Ewa Majewska's text.[2] For me, it's crucial because I think a lot about how we can resist many issues and problems connected with the body / corporeality and how we can regain the feeling of agency, especially in a particular political context we are both familiar with as Polish young women. Having experience but also being part of the 'young girl' category - a human having reproductive function - is very important for capitalist exploitation, but is also not taken seriously. I was trying to break this chain and emancipate through many harmful stereotypes tied to conservative gender roles and narration, very early, but I still feel like some of it stayed in my body. I keep catching myself being self-disciplined, self-optimised, and self-regulated. I also have two younger sisters, who are in this coming-of-age moment. Even if this is not the main area for my artistic enquiry, I treat it as a big motivation behind my artistic practice.

Through 'weak resistance' we can understand forms of resilience, which characterise 'anti-heroism', being grounded in everyday life and relationality, which often become unseen in narrations around art and its production. For me, it's very interesting to think about how this can be translated into artistic language grounded in the material and relationship between applied methods and medium. Maybe it can be a 'warm-up question', but I would love to ask you what you understand by this category? What motivated you to work with it, and if you have some practices from everyday life which can be seen as weak resistance?

Maria: The word that comes closest to my mind when thinking about weak resistance is - unspectacularity. Weak resistance was one of the key categories that led me to study collectivity in the work of women artists in the 1980s. Curiosity about the lack of strictly women's groups in the 80s motivated me to look for the unspectacular manifestations of support between women artists. Most of the time, it was simple acts like tenderly looking at each other's practices, being together, taking care of each other's children, and offering each other affection. Maybe that's why your artistic practice felt very familiar to me. One of the first works of yours that I came into contact with was Practising Soft Forms of Resistance as Artist - a visual essay, and through your storytelling, I immediately recognised a narrative deeply rooted in your relationships and personal experiences.

As for myself, I think that each of us creating a safer space for ourselves and our friends and sisters is already practising weak resistance. Whether it is remembering to check on your friend if she arrived home safely, or telling each other about the world in words from us and for us. I always try to thank my girls, who motivate what I do whenever there's an opportunity, and each time I feel like I'm sticking the knife in the myth of the genius individualist.

Kinga: I feel that my practice is in a weird 'grey zone' between political art and something rooted in material investigation. As a woman* artist from a particular political context, I feel something pulling me into socially engaged practices and awareness raising. At the same time, working closely with materials like metal, pigments, and textiles, gives me a very empowering feeling of deciding on my own - something which was taken away from me as a woman. Of course, this feeling might be illusory, and maybe I am falling into the individualistic trap, but what I am trying to figure out is how through material practices we won't lose collective voices, if these different processes can go together or if I should separate them and accept that I have two different types of practice. I am wondering if you see some forms of relationality that can be translated into material investigation. Do you see a space to work with weak resistance beyond activist actions?

Maria: I think that the process of very sensitive and in-depth work with material, as opposed to focusing on simple representation, can be seen as weak resistance. Following the thought of new feminist materialisms, matter is an incredibly important factor of everyday social life, and it is impossible to talk about everyday life without thinking about how we co-exist with its material dimension, but also how we exploit it. Working with material, both intuitively and thoughtfully, is like a process of negotiating agency, challenging binary oppositions and the anthropocentric relationship between humans and other beings. Building a relationship with the material you are working with is one step further than just respecting it. Your works also work on two different levels - one telling the story of the material and the other telling the story of girlhood or togetherness, like braiding each other's hair or taking a bath together. Then they come together in an object that emulates weak resistance. (...)

Kinga: Very important to me is also thinking about geographical situatedness, the distance separating me from experiencing everyday life in the Polish context. I think we have a very blurred line between insider and outsider. In my enquiry, this was the problem hidden under the skin, which slowly became more and more noticeable - like a pimple before the first date you want to avoid. Through psychogeography, a cartographic way to map my situatedness and the geographical distance involved, spatial aspects become closely connected with time and non-linear relations between past, present, and future. I love digging in the past. Last time we spoke about a medieval map made by nuns and a 16th-century map presenting the romantic sphere. I want to ask what ‘map’ is for you? Are there things that should be mapped? And what shouldn’t?

Maria: In a way, I think feminist cartographies and maps can be almost anything that’s related to how we move through space, how we experience it, and how the power structures within it affect us. A feminist geographer, Gillian Rose, has written about the idea that power structures can be thought of as a kind of ordered landscape, something that can be represented visually and spatially. Representation in feminist mapping doesn’t mean appropriation of territory, but quite the opposite - it grows out of the reflexivity of the researcher herself and the situated knowledges of the subjects she works with. The decision of what to map and what not to map has to be rooted in the researcher’s tender approach. As Donna Haraway said, it is never innocent to adopt a marginal perspective, even if our first assumption is that we belong to the group we choose to represent, we still have to remain critical of the subject and our situatedness. I think that’s why deciding on our map as a project willing to be in a constant state of becoming was something that changed the perspective of what maps are and can be for both of us.

Kinga: Many times during my MFA, I was wondering what makes a particular method, aesthetics, medium, feminist, and how to justify it. We both know what artistic education in Poland looks like - we don’t often challange the relevance of the mediums we are using, if the right medium can serve well for a particular topic and if the areas and ways that we work are our own, or if we become trained in them due to educational process. I heard from some of my teachers here that I basically should unlearn many things. But the real problem is how to ‘re-learn’ again without getting stuck in the despair. In my re-learning process, I came to think about how we can think about feminist methods in art. Maybe here we can use cartography as a good ‘landing’ point and talk about what makes mapping practices feminist.

Maria: In fact, I believe that the very process of re-learning is the key to feminist thinking. But re-learning is a process of being open to redefining what we know, while still engaging with our lived and embodied experiences. Feminist cartography and mapping practices, like all feminist science, should work with the category of femininity* itself because it’s a difficult category, rooted in a tremendous amount of exclusion, and yet it seems to me that it should be worked with. As Johanna Hedva concludes in “Sick Woman Theory”: “Though the identity of “woman” has erased and excluded many (especially women of color and trans/non-binary/gender-fluid people), I choose to use it because it still represents the un-cared-for, the secondary, the opressed, the non-, the un-, the less-than. The problematic of this term will always require critique, and I hope that “Sick Woman Theory” can help undo those problematics in its own way. [...] I’m inspired to use the word “woman” because it can still be radical to be a woman in the twenty-first century”. There is no womanhood without black feminism, decolonial feminism, transfeminism, class-diverse feminism, disability studies, queer theory and what we should be putting the most pressure on right now - the freedom of Palestinian women. This is what feminist cartographies should try to map - spatial-social relations, our commonalities and our differences - creating a web of different understandings and experiences of womanhood. (...)

Kinga and Maria have been working together since November 2024. Together, they are developing a map that will serve as a gameboard for guest interviews and interventions. The first version of the map and first interventions are planned for summer 2025.

More information about the project can be found here: kingamolinska.com/feministmapping

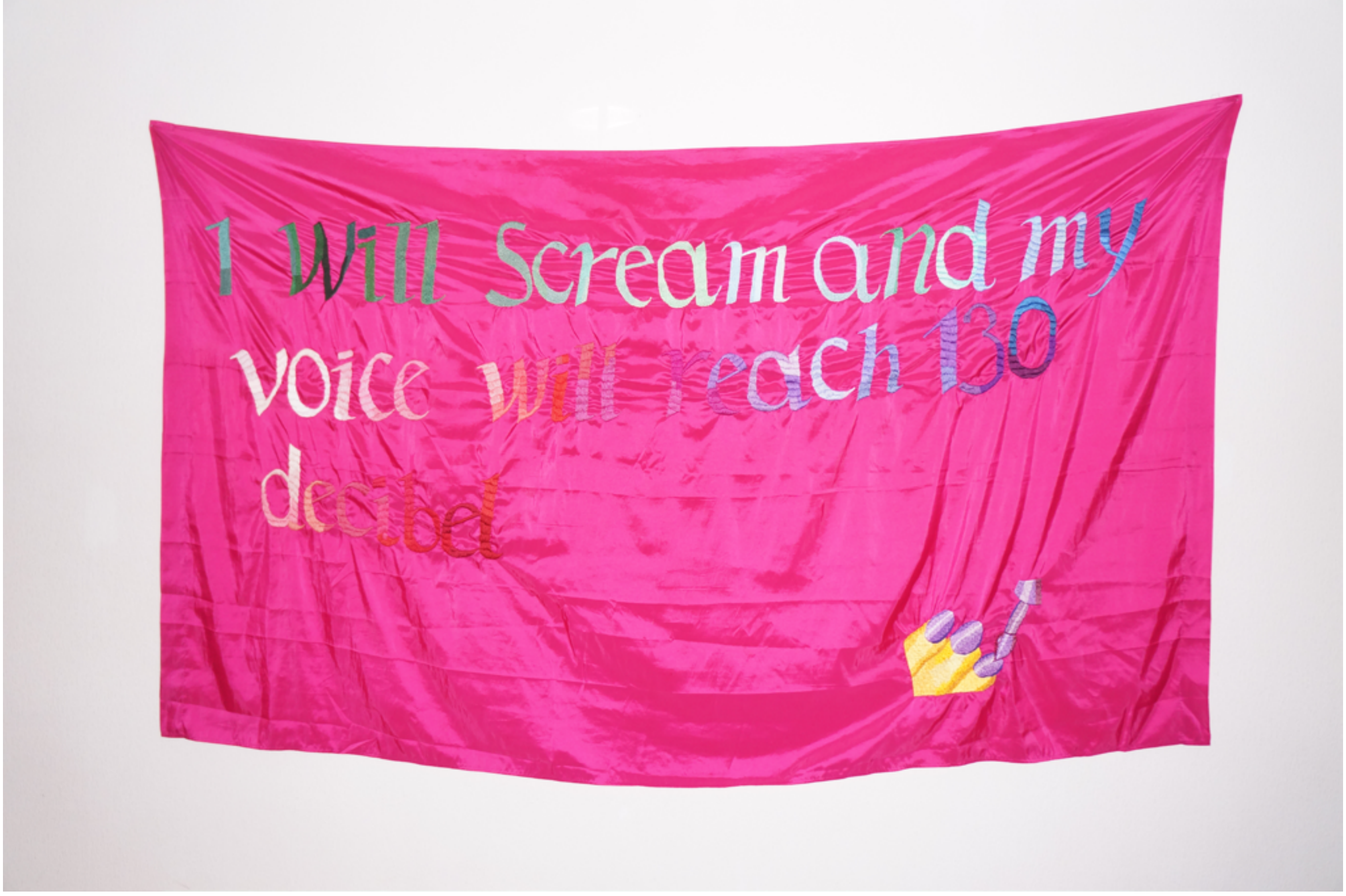
References

1. More information: http://autoarachnology.net
2. Ewa Majewska, “Słaby opór. Obraz, wspólnota i utopia poza paradygmatem heroistycznym,” Weak Resistance: Image, Community and Utopia Beyond the Heroic Paradigm, trans. Kinga Molińska, Praktyka Teoretyczna 32, no. 2 (2019): 7–20, accessed April 2, 2025, https://doi.org/10.14746/prt.2019.2.0.
3. You can find my visual essay here: https://kingamolinska.com/essay

Ioulia Florentzi

Ioulia Florentzi (b.1998) is a Greek artist and researcher. She graduated from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2022 with a BFA/MFA in Fine Art. Her artistic practice explores femininity, patriarchy, human relationships, and emotions through an intersectional and anticapitalist feminist lens. She loves animal prints, cats, and red wine.

To Carry This Love’s Weight With Me Is Heavy

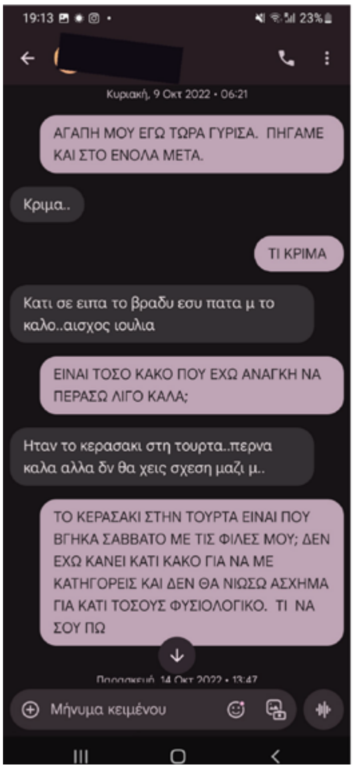


“I Will Scream and my Voice Will Reach 130 Decibels”, embroidery on polyester, 1,40x 2,20 cm, 2024 The Guiness World Record for the loudest scream ever recorded is held by Jill Drake. The scream was 129 decibels.

In my project “To Carry This Love’s Weight With Me Is Heavy” I have explored romantic love with men under patriarchy, and the notion of feminist friendship, a term I have chosen to define as friendship among individuals with a feminist ethos, which often acquires a political dimension and empowers people to resist accepting behaviors deriving from the patriarchal regime, either directly or subtly. Through an intersectional feminist lens, the project examines romantic relationships with men in patriarchy, how people attracted to men experience those relationships, and how friendship has the potential to serve as a counterforce to patriarchal intimate partners.

romance(?)

Departing from the feminist method of autotheory, this project emerged from my experiences as a Greek cisgender woman attracted to men, and my relationships with my female and queer friends. Hyperanalysis of love, desire, dating, forming committed relationships, and sex with men are frequent topics of discussion among us. The experiences we often discuss reveal a red thread, a pattern of behaviours that many of us, as individuals attracted to men, have faced. I began by exploring my own experiences as research material. My intention was not merely self-expression but to investigate how my own experience could function as a source of knowledge, and whether this had the potential to be meaningful or valuable for others.



[redacted]

Κυριακή, 9 Οκτ 2022 • 06:21

ΑΓΑΠΗ ΜΟΥ ΕΓΩ ΤΩΡΑ ΓΥΡΙΣΑ. ΠΗΓΑΜΕ ΚΑΙ ΣΤΟ ΕΝΟΛΑ ΜΕΤΑ.

Κριμα..

ΤΙ ΚΡΙΜΑ

Κατι σε ειπα το βραδυ εσυ πατα μ το καλο..αισχος ιουλια

ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟΣΟ ΚΑΚΟ ΠΟΥ ΕΧΩ ΑΝΑΓΚΗ ΝΑ ΠΕΡΑΣΩ ΛΙΓΟ ΚΑΛΑ;

Ηταν το κερασακι στη τουρτα..περνα καλα αλλα δν θα χεις σχεση μαζι μ..

ΤΟ ΚΕΡΑΣΑΚΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΟΥΡΤΑ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΠΟΥ ΒΓΗΚΑ ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ ΜΕ ΤΙΣ ΦΙΛΕΣ ΜΟΥ; ΔΕΝ ΕΧΩ ΚΑΝΕΙ ΚΑΤΙ ΚΑΚΟ ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΜΕ ΚΑΤΗΓΟΡΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΝ ΘΑ ΝΙΩΣΩ ΑΣΧΗΜΑ ΓΙΑ ΚΑΤΙ ΤΟΣΟΥΣ ΦΥΣΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟ. ΤΙ ΝΑ ΣΟΥ ΠΩ

Παρασκευή, 14 Οκτ 2022 • 13:47

Honey I just got home. We also went to Enola (gay bar in Thessaloniki).

Shame...

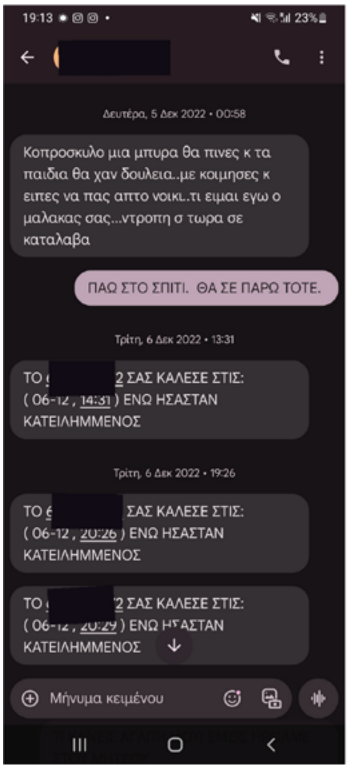
What's a shame?

I told you something last night...you keep on getting close to the bone...Outrage Ioulia

Is it that bad that I have the need to have some fun?

It was the cherry on top...have fun but you will not have a relationship with me..

Is it the cherry on top that I went out with my friends on a Saturday nigh? I didn't do anything bad for you to be accusing me like that and I will not feel bad for doing something that normal. I have nothing to say.



[redacted]

Δευτέρα, 5 Δεκ 2022 • 00:58

Κοπροσκυλο μια μπυρα θα πινες κ τα παιδια θα χαν δουλεια..με κοιμησες κ ειπες να πας απτο νοικι..τι ειμαι εγω ο μαλακας σας...ντροπη σ τωρα σε καταλαβα

ΠΑΩ ΣΤΟ ΣΠΙΤΙ. ΘΑ ΣΕ ΠΑΡΩ ΤΟΤΕ.

Τρίτη, 6 Δεκ 2022 • 13:31

ΤΟ [redacted] ΣΑΣ ΚΑΛΕΣΕ ΣΤΙΣ: (06-12 , 14:31) ΕΝΩ ΗΣΑΣΤΑΝ ΚΑΤΕΙΛΗΜΜΕΝΟΣ

Τρίτη, 6 Δεκ 2022 • 19:26

ΤΟ [redacted] ΣΑΣ ΚΑΛΕΣΕ ΣΤΙΣ: (06-12 , 20:26) ΕΝΩ ΗΣΑΣΤΑΝ ΚΑΤΕΙΛΗΜΜΕΝΟΣ

ΤΟ [redacted] ΣΑΣ ΚΑΛΕΣΕ ΣΤΙΣ: (06-12 , 20:29) ΕΝΩ ΗΣΑΣΤΑΝ ΚΑΤΕΙΛΗΜΜΕΝΟΣ

You deadbeat, you said you would just have a beer and that your friends were busy...You put me to sleep and now your are also going to Niki (bar in Thessaloniki)...What am I? Your malakas? (sap, fool)...Shame on you, now I am realising...

I am going home. I will call you then.

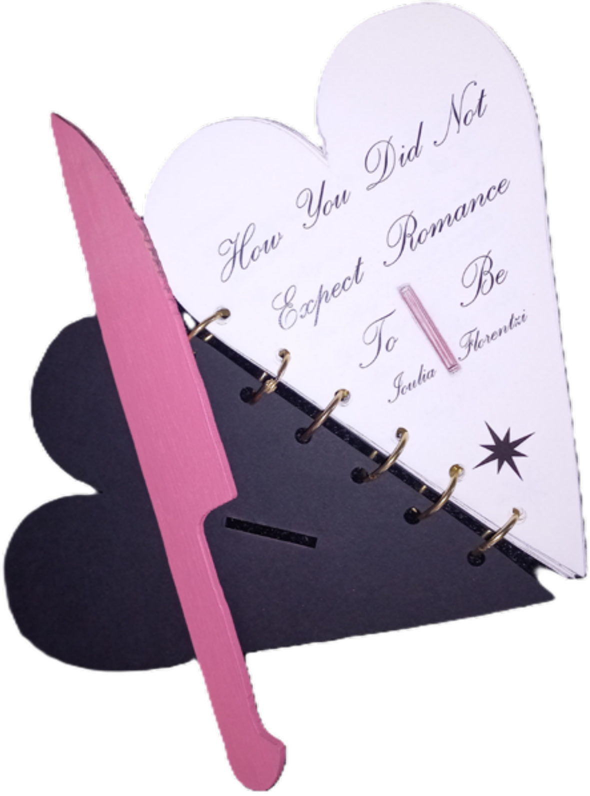
Incoming call

Incoming call

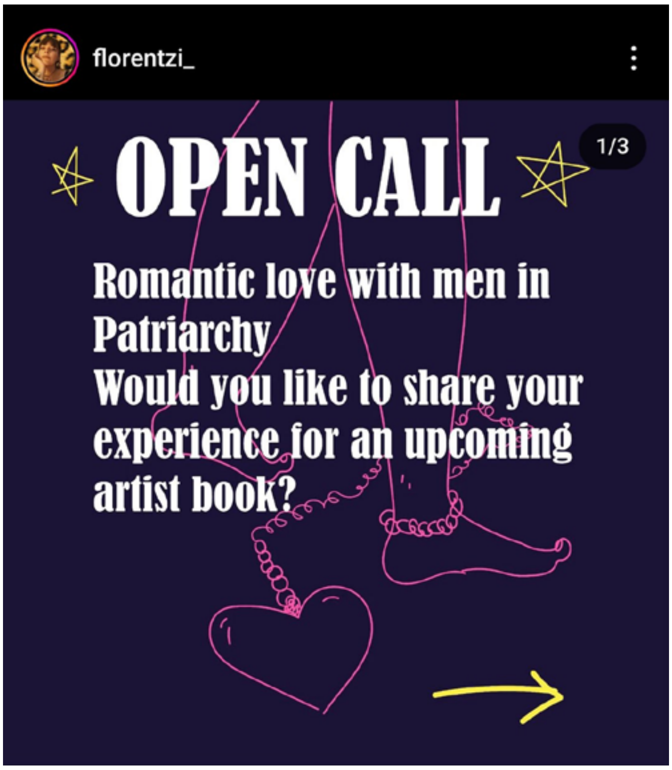
Incoming call

screenshots from text messages I was exchanging with an ex-boyfriend in 2022.

Lauren Fournier has written that the history of feminism is – in a sense – a history of autotheory.[1] Utilizing one's own life as a means to pursue research has long been a method used among feminist and queer artists and researchers – thus it has been devalued by the white-male dominated academia that fails to value personal experience as a valuable and valid resource of knowledge. Furthermore, Fournier suggests that the act of disclosing facts from one's private life to other women played an important role in the formation of the women's liberation movement in the 60's.[2] Storytelling is something we have always done, and it constitutes a political act.


How You Did Not Expect Romance To Be
Ioulia Florentzi

"How You Did Not Expect Romance To Be" is a self-published artist book that includes 25 "Love Stories" from people attracted to men, about how they experience romantic interactions and relationships with men in patriarchy.


florentzi_
1/3

OPEN CALL

Romantic love with men in Patriarchy
Would you like to share your experience for an upcoming artist book?

I gathered the stories from an open call published on my personal IG account in January 2025. People submitted their stories in a google form with the option to remain anonymous.

Based on Gotby's argument that our emotional lives are inherently political, I wanted to show that heartbreak can be political.[3] Frustration, pain, and annoyance caused to us who are attracted to men, along with physical violence and sexual harassment, do not constitute subjective or random events – their origin is a deeply rooted system whose consequences on our love lives we sometimes fail to identify. When my ex was threatening me over the phone to end our relationship because I had decided to party with my girlies on a Saturday night, it wasn't because he was having a bad day. It was because he saw me as his possession, believing he was entitled to give me orders which I should obey, meanwhile forgetting that he had met me under the exact same conditions only a few years earlier. It was because he was patriarchal.

The gathered stories do, once more, unveil a red thread, revealing experiences that seem to share things in common. In the book, people share stories about Tinder dates, one-night stands, committed and long-lasting relationships. They talk about displeasing sex, fear, tolerance, betrayal, rape, subordination, exploitation, disappointment, loneliness.

I was on a Tinder date with a guy who seemed really cool from the pictures. He was a special force's firefighter after all. He had pictures of him doing all kinds of extreme sports and I thought it was going to be an exciting date. Well, it wasn't…He was really dull in person. So simple. He said he could show me the stars, but he could only find one constellation. After he kissed me, I realized there was no sexual chemistry between us either. I wanted to leave soon after and he insisted on taking me home. I wanted to avoid him finding out where I lived. Just in case. But no matter what I said it didn't seem to work.Then I came up with an excuse for why he shouldn't come. I told him that my neighbor was crazy and stalking me, and that he acts out when he sees other guys in my apartment, and he could be dangerous. But even this lie couldn't stop him.

Unfortunately, neither could I. I felt too uncomfortable to just say no. So, I reluctantly let him take me home and then even ended up having sex with him. It was as dull as him. I never told him I didn't want to have sex with him but still, I wish he would have opened his eyes long enough to understand it. I feel like they know though. They just don't seem to care.

"Love Story" #5

I was texting this really handsome guy for a while, but I stopped replying to him a few months ago because of his last text message. When I posted the open call post on my IG story to share stories here for romantic love in the patriarchy, he replied to it: "Don't be disheartened and go down this road haha." His last message to me before that was that he's been reading Jordan Peterson...

"Love Story" #7

gossip

Friendship was an important part of the enquiry in many ways. Besides a method and an ethic, friendship constituted one of the roles I tried to embody as an artist while pursuing this project. I did so in my "confessional" embroideries, in publishing the open call for storytelling, and in opening a Feminist Kafenio for people to come to with their friends and enjoy each-other's company.

Artist Emily Pope states in one of her artworks in the series "Positive Postcards" that Under Late Capitalism, Friendship Feels So Rebellious, It Is The Only Viable Subculture Left. Friendship among women has been attacked and devalued not only by capitalism but by patriarchy. A good example to illustrate how women and the relationships between them have been demonized is the story of the word gossip.

Friendship used to be men's privilege in ancient and medieval years, a fact that dehumanized women, as people held the belief that only men could form meaningful friendships.[4] In the essay "On the Meaning of Gossip", Silvia Federici explains that the word gossip used to refer to a close, loving female friend, and its definition shifted to mean malicious talk and spoiled discussion during the rise of modern England.[5]

Gossip's history demonstrates how patriarchy has socially tarnished women and the bonds between them, presenting them as lazy interactions that aim to spitefully criticize people. Attacking and extirpating women's relationships is a modus operandi of patriarchy that validates the power and the meaningfulness these commons and these relationships have, and their potential to encourage change. If women coming together were not dangerous for patriarchy's sustainability, the patriarchal system would not care at all.

I aimed to reclaim non-male friendship symbolically, by creating "A Place For Friends To Chill: A Feminist Kafenio", a multisensory bar installation. People were encouraged to visit my Kafenio with their friend(s) and enjoy each-other'scompany while having a drink and a girl dinner together. Friends were able to just sit and talk, or embroider together, read feminist literature together, take selfies together, and, above all, just be together.

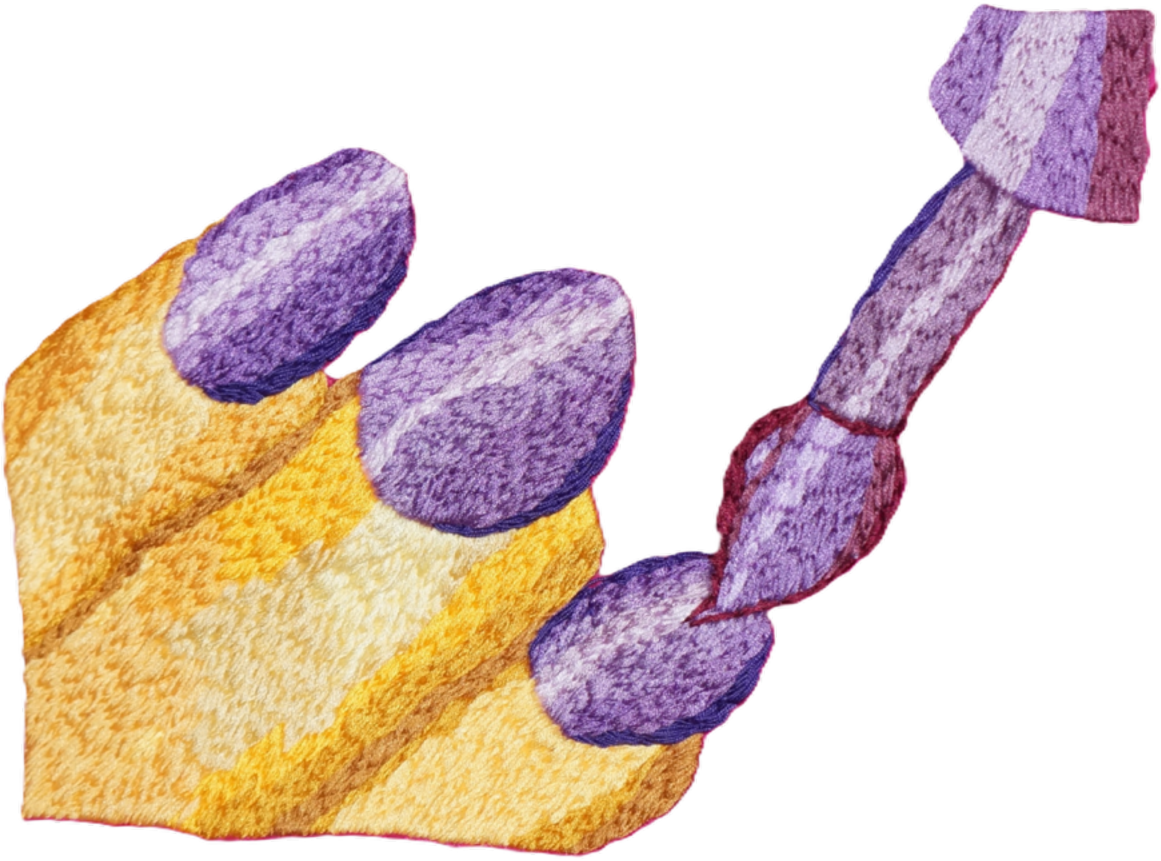
A Kafenio is a traditional Greek café and tavern, which traditionally were (and in some cases, especially in rural areas, still are) male-dominated spaces, created for men to go to after or before work, to have coffee or a drink and socialize with other men from the neighbourhood. At the Kafenio, these men could spontaneously go to meet each-other, while their wives stayed at home to take care of the household, restricted from social life. In my work, the Kafenio is used as a metaphor, a symbol of the domestication of women in Greece, women of the past and the present, who have spent endless nights waiting for their (possibly drunk) husbands to come back home.

References

1. Lauren Fournier, Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Theory and Criticism. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021, 8.
2. Fournier, 9.
3. Alva Gotby, They Call It Love. London: Verso, 2024, xviii.
4. Judith Kegan Gardiner, "Women's Friendships, Feminist Friendships", Feminist Studies 42, no. 2, (2016), 484, accessed September 16, 2024, https://doi.org/10.15767/feministstudies.42.2.0484
5. Silvia Federici, To Kinigi ton Magisson Xthes kai Simera, 60.

A Place For Friends To Chill
A Place For Friends To Chill

Embroidered napkins for the visitors of Kafenio



Rikke Bogetoft

Rikke Bogetoft (1995) is a Danish artist and researcher. Their practice is situated in queerfeminist investigations of bodies and power, and radical imaginations of alternative narratives through interdisciplinary and conceptual forms. Bogetoft holds a Bachelor of Art & Technology from Aalborg University.

@fest_fissen *rikkebogetoft.dk* *rikkebogetoft@gmail.com*

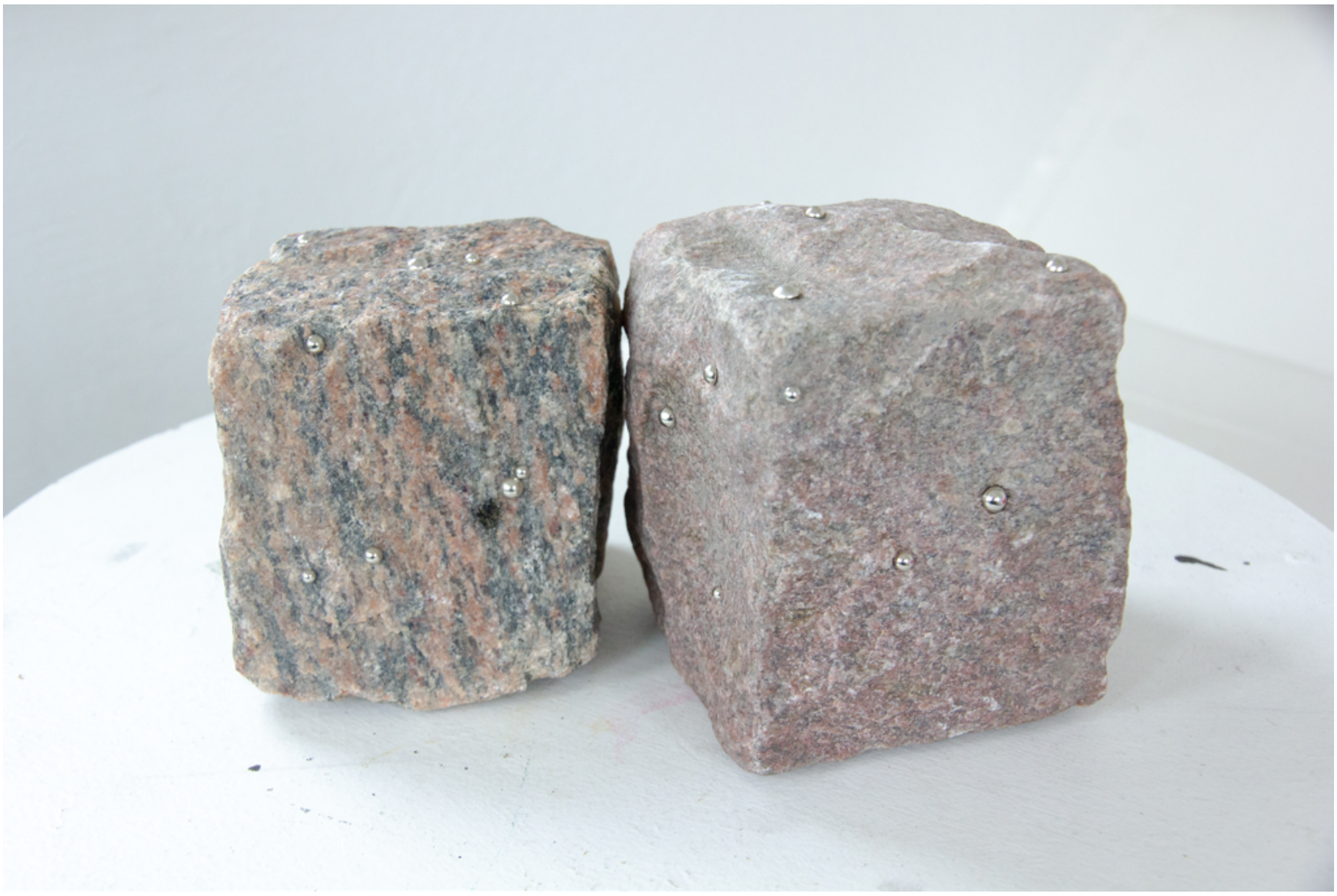
Artist portrait by Iza Štrumbelj Obla

[Queer people] make us not only question what is real, and what 'must' be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted. These practices of instituting new modes of reality take place in part through the scene of embodiment, where the body is not understood as a static and accomplished fact, but as an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone.[1]

Judith Butler

Witchcraft has historically been the province of the marginalized, disenfranchised, victimized, and oppressed – those most frequently denied protection or justice. Malefic spells are a magickal arsenal for those who lack any other.[2]

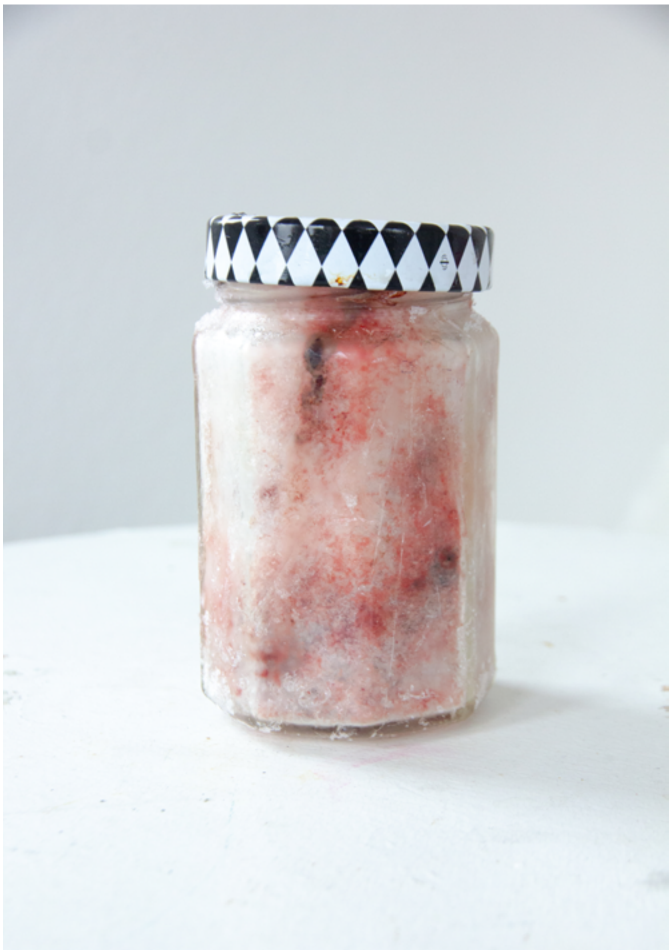
Illes Judika



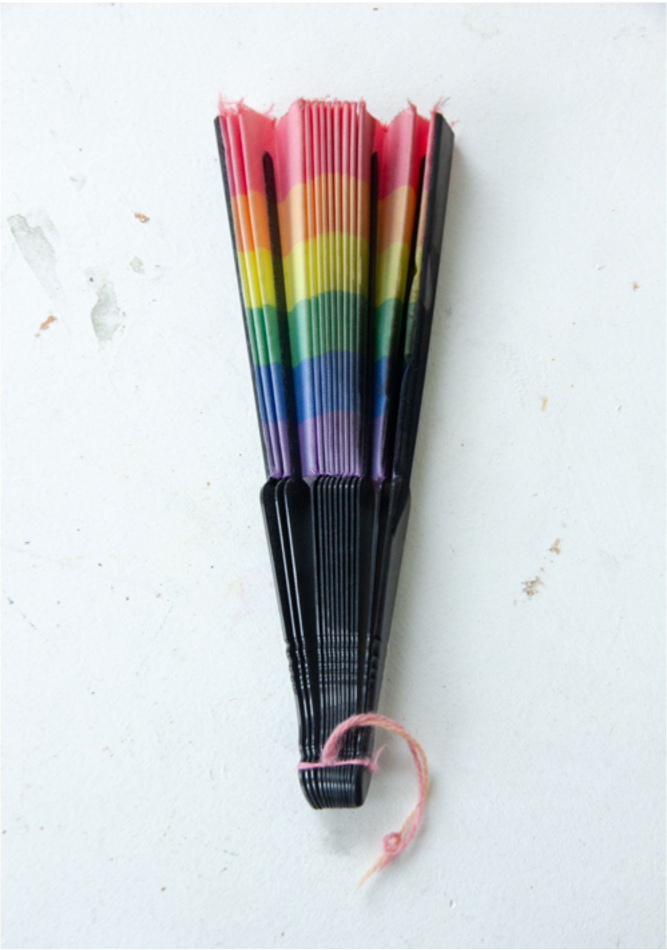
EARTH
cobblestones, rhinestones

Riot magic is a form of magic concerned with revolting against assumed truths. It seeks to challenge normative powers and is marked by non-conformity to ideals of human existence. As a practice it is an especially queer form of magic – invoking the perspective of the other to manifest new norms and modes of being. Riot magic approaches from the perspective of the non-normative, the marginalized other and the dehumanized, calling into existence alternative realities to those assumed universal.

Many magical disciplines developed as means to exert control over one's own existence: attraction magic seeks to call into existence the wishes of the practitioner; inversely, repulsion magic and apotropaic magic seek to ward off unwanted energy. Malefic magic, on the other hand, most known for involving dolls and personal ephemera (and roughly written off as "evil magic"), developed as a practice for those with limited ways to resist the control of others. Much like the prefix 'riot', 'malefic' might suggest that these practices have a violent or nefarious nature. While malefic magic carries with it a narrative of revenge, its origin as a practice of resistance against oppressive powers seems lost to the pop-culture iconography of the voodoo doll. Malefic magic developed as a practice for those who had no other way of resisting those who control them. Employing readily available materials, such as fabric, stone, and more recently readymades such as dolls and bottles, it offered practitioners an accessible and safe(r) route for fighting back against racialized and cultural categorizations of people, and subsequent discrimination and violence. Performed in secrecy, the practitioner could shield their identity and avoid retribution from a target who might have an ability of control and power over them.



WATER
blood, snow



AIR
fan, string

Shared between the practitioners of malefic magic and riot magic are the ways in which they move within and expand to the limits of the territories accessible to them; they employ tactics and channels developed by lived experience of oppression, resisting in ways accessible and appropriate to the individual practitioner. While malefic magic is done secretly, without the knowledge of the potential recipient, riot magic is manifested publicly and communally. Potions and spells can be made in private, but they are always activated by and aimed toward a public. As a call for action, as a communal activation or as a public intervention, the practice of riot magic is rooted in its public expression of defiance and resistance. This publicness is a privilege not often afforded to the practitioner of malefic magic; although practitioners of riot magic may utilize face coverings or shield their identity, their actions are marked by a certain capacity to not conform (or as some might contest: a non-capacity to perform) – ultimately allowing them to resist publicly in ways not possible for the practitioner of malefic magic. Even so, in practice the engagement with magic is rarely so strictly segregated, and many practitioners of riot magic risk a great deal in terms of safety, social and professional security and legal repercussions by being publicly non-conforming. For the magic practitioner, developing one's own arsenal of spells and potions across magic disciplines is a balancing act of safety, risk, justice and non-conformitye; and in doing so, manifesting alternative realities which resist and reimagine assumed truths of human existence. Whether the magic is 'riot' or 'malefic', is perhaps only a question of how public the practitioner is able to be in their resistance.

FIRE
glass bottle, gasoline, polystyrene,
acetone, polyester

“RIOT MAGIC” is a graduation project by artist Rikke Bogetoft.

“RIOT MAGIC” investigates and problematizes the dehumanization of queer individuals and communities, and attempts to radically imagine new tactics of resistance toward queer necropolitics. The term ‘necropolitics’ was popularized by political theorist Achille Mbembe, and connotes state sanctioned processes and powers which enact violence and death upon certain individuals and communities. The necropolitical strategy of dehumanization is instituted by reproducing the narrative, through social, cultural and state sanctioned dimensions, that a certain community, lifestyle and/or categorization of people are akin to non-human animals, likening behavioural and/or physical traits to traits seen as animalistic, and therefore not human. This strategy is employed as a form of moral reasoning which justifies differential treatment; the resulting social dynamic, infrahumanization, reproduces the narrative that dehumanized communities are not only less than human, but an entirely other species.

“RIOT MAGIC” attempts to challenge these processes of dehumanization, building upon a history of queer and feminist resistance tactics utilizing the chain-of-action, or methods, developed by and embedded in queerfeminist communities, such as the dancing protests developed by the anarchist group Bøssernes Befrielsesfront (Danish faction of the Gay Liberation Front) in the 1970’s, and the underground feminist zine-culture which sparked the punk Riot Grrrl movement in the 1990’s. The project is situated within the fields of queer death studies and feminist ethics of care, and advocates for intersectional solidarity across marginalized communities.

RIOT MAGIC is inspired by the work of practitioners such as queer artist and death doula Zafira Vrba Woodski, feminist artist Judy Chicago, gay novelist and publisher Larry Mitchell, feminist activist collective Pussy Riot and drag collective CULT, alongside the many queer groups and individuals committed to fighting fascism, occupation and genocide – yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

“RIOT MAGIC” unfolds at Skeppsbron 4, Gothenburg, during Spring 2025.

References

1. Butler, Judith. Undoing Gender. London: Routledge, 2004.
2. Illes Judika. “Malefic Magick”. In Witchcraft, edited by Jessica Hundley. Köln: Taschen, 2022.

Queer Office For Action

Rikke Bogetoft and Kent Grundberg

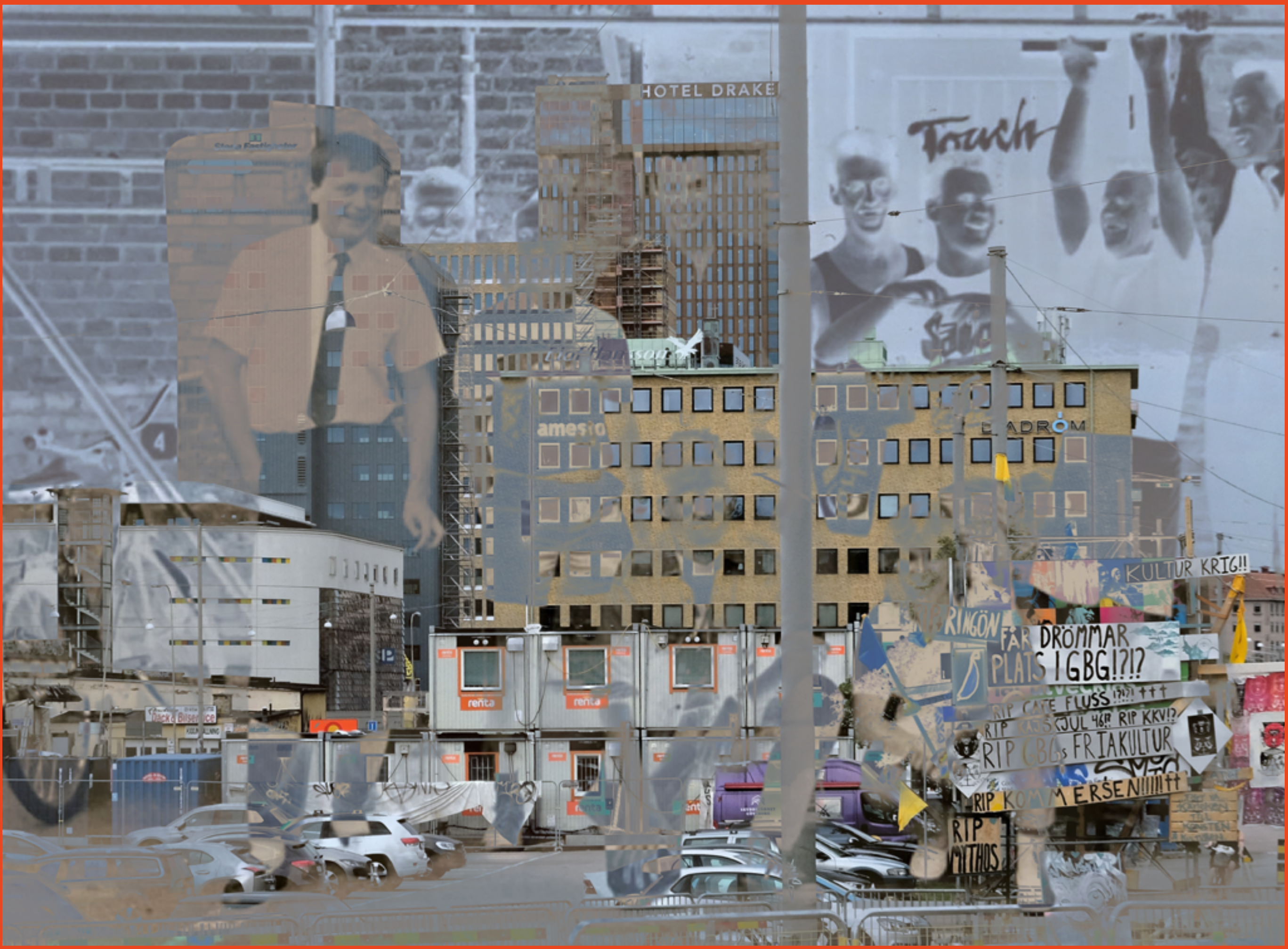
The Queer Office for Action, is a duo project facilitated by Rikke Bogetoft and Kent Grundberg. The Queer Office for Action opens April 14th 2025, and will activate the site at Skeppsbron as a queer counter-space which will host collaborations, performances and interventions.

@queer_office_for_action

Artists and facilitators of Queer Office for Action,
K Kent Grundberg and Rikke Bogetoft.
Photo by Still Sam.

Queer Office for Action is a queer counter space for rest, riot and queer revolution. As a site-reactive project, the Queer Office for Action occupies and activates the fifth floor of Skeppsbron 4, Gothenburg, for six weeks during Spring 2025. The project problematizes the disappearance of queer alternative spaces, specifically in the Skeppsbron area which previously housed many queer initiatives such as the gay nightclubs Pedro and Touch, the lesbian bookstore Lila Skymningar (Purple Twilights), gay bookstore Rosa Rummet, offices for the activist groups Lesbian Front, Röda Bögar (Red Fags) and later RFSL, as well as Mataraska, one of many feminist collectives. Close to Skeppsbron 4 lies Esperantoplatsen, once a hotspot of queer activity and the site of much queer violence; today the site hosts Sweden's first LGBTQI+ monument "The Glade", created by Conny Karlsson Lundgren as a reminder of the continuous fight for queer rights – a fight prominently anchored on the adjacent street Stora Badhusgatan, which hosted the founding meeting for Gothenburg's first gay association Friends Club in 1950, only six years after the decriminalization of homosexuality in Sweden.

Queer Office for Action continues the queer history of Skeppsbron, and situates the queer artist as a facilitator of place-making processes. Queer Office for Action operates across the Department for Rest and the Department for Riot. These two departments operate in tandem, in entangled structures and in parallel, as both physical sites and methodological frameworks. Visit Queer Office for Action at Skeppsbron 4, Gothenburg until May 25th 2025.


HOTEL DRAKE
Touch
amesto
KULTUR KRIG!!
RINGÖN
FÅR DRÖMMAR PLATS I GBG!?!?
RIP CAFE FLUSS !?!?! +++
RIP KAJSKJUL 46!! RIP KKV!?
RIP GBGs FRIAKULTUR
RIP KOMMERSEN!!!!!++
RIP MYTHOS
renta

Skeppsbron urban development and archival image documenting patrons of the gay club Touch. In collaboration with Anders Westerström, Maria Wahlstrom and Daniel Terres, Queer Office for Action invites to a guided city walk and roundtable discussion on alternative (queer) spaces, the artworkers' role in placemaking, and urban gentrification processes.
Skeppsbron photo by Anders Westerström, collage by Rikke Bogetoft.

Reverend Zafira Vrba Woodski, artist and death doula, performs a guided meditation on transcendence from the human and embracing the non-human at Queer Office for Action.
Photo by Zafira Vrba Woodski.

K Kent Grundberg

K Kent Grundberg is a Swedish artist and educator, with roots in DIY-culture and social movements, holds a BFA in Metal Art and whose practice spans from sculpture to activism. For their MFA Grundberg investigates mycelial methods and queer counteractions for marginalised existences, and focuses currently at collaborative and participatory practices.

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Empathy and entanglement

"I don't know how to tell you to care about other people"

I have seen this statement online over and over in various artworks and memes. It is such a basic message, yet it encompasses it all. Especially if we by "people" mean "beings" or "lives". Recently one of the world's most influential people used his place in the spotlight to claim that "empathy is the weakness of the western world".[1] There are indeed a lot of weaknesses in the Western world, I'll give him that. However – empathy is not one of them.

Where to even begin contradicting such a fundamentally stupid, arrogant and ignorant worldview?

Maybe like this:

Firstly: Evolution is not solely driven by competition but by empathy, or mutual aid.

Secondly: We are all entangled. Human beings with other human beings. Human beings with other beings. Other beings with other beings. Animals, plants, fungi – we are all interdependent and parts of intricate ecosystems. That is not ideology – that is fact.

Thirdly: No money, no inherited apartheid-sponsored emerald mine, no political influence in the world can buy you independence from this entanglement.

However – an anthropocentric worldview has made us believe that it is up to us – as humans – to choose or decide how things should function and whether we are intertwined or not. It isn't.

Balanced ecosystems are fundamental for all life, and balanced ecosystems require biodiversity. A key, but by humans very overlooked, factor in all entanglement is fungi.
The symbiosis between fungi and other species called mycorrhiza is another fundamental aspect in functioning ecosystems. *(Yes. There are "harmful" fungi as well – mainly harmful for human economical interests in agroindustry. And due to capitalist interests more research has been conducted on those species of fungi than on all the mutually beneficial biological processes. Because that's where the money is.[2])*

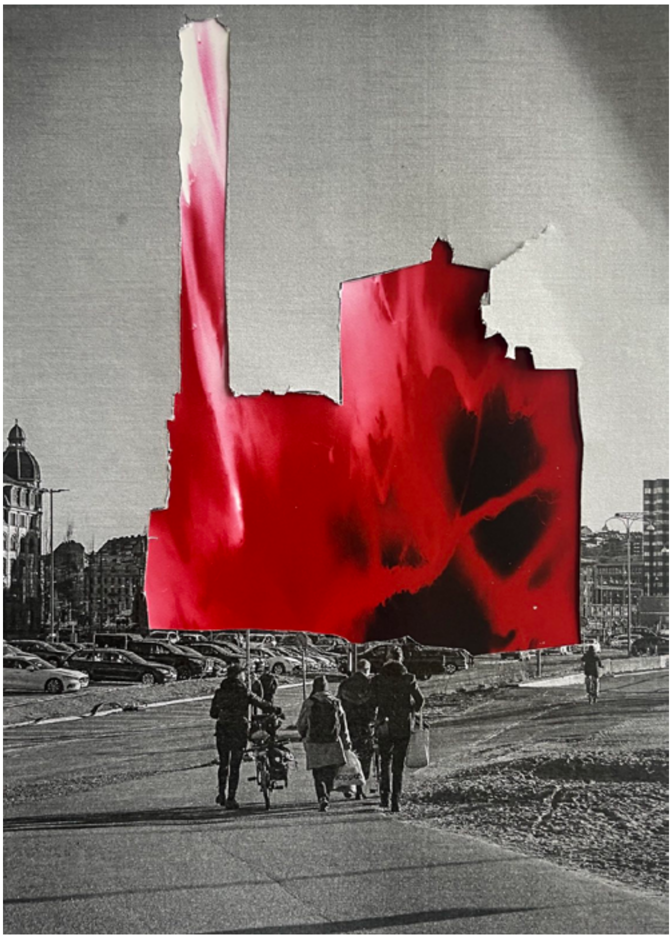
We live in the 6th mass extinction, which is most apparent in insects, and when they go – we go. The planet will do just fine – even thrive – if humans go extinct. Humans, on the other hand, will be screwed as soon as such a tiny organism as the bee goes extinct. *(Which, by the way, might happen pretty soon due to capitalism induced colony collapse disorder, CCD[3]).*

For those of us human beings, who realise this urgency and would like to do better:
Abolishing human exceptionalism and accepting that we are part of everything and everyone else is the only way to survive the ongoing crisis of the Anthropocene. To weave new futures, we must find new ways of thinking and doing. *We can't take down the master's house with the master's own tools.*

Making kin with everything Othered and deemed lesser by human supremacy, eco feminist scholar Donna Haraway calls the challenge of living-with and dying-with each other on a damaged planet "staying with the trouble". She states that this "requires making oddkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become-with each other or not at all". Haraway suggests "humus" and "humusities" instead of humanities as an option for a sustainable approach for humans. *As humus we have something to offer.*[4]

Patricia MacCormack's approach to the challenge of living and dying on a damaged planet and humans' contribution to the unmaking of this world, is the concept "the ahuman", which "proscribes no new template and fetishizes no other in its transformativity. Rather, the ahuman celebrates and demands imagination and creativity in an increasingly impossible world".[5]

Seeking ways forward has to be done in accordance with the non-human. Haraway proposes "tentacular thinking".[6] *I look into the diverse and mysterious world of mycology:*

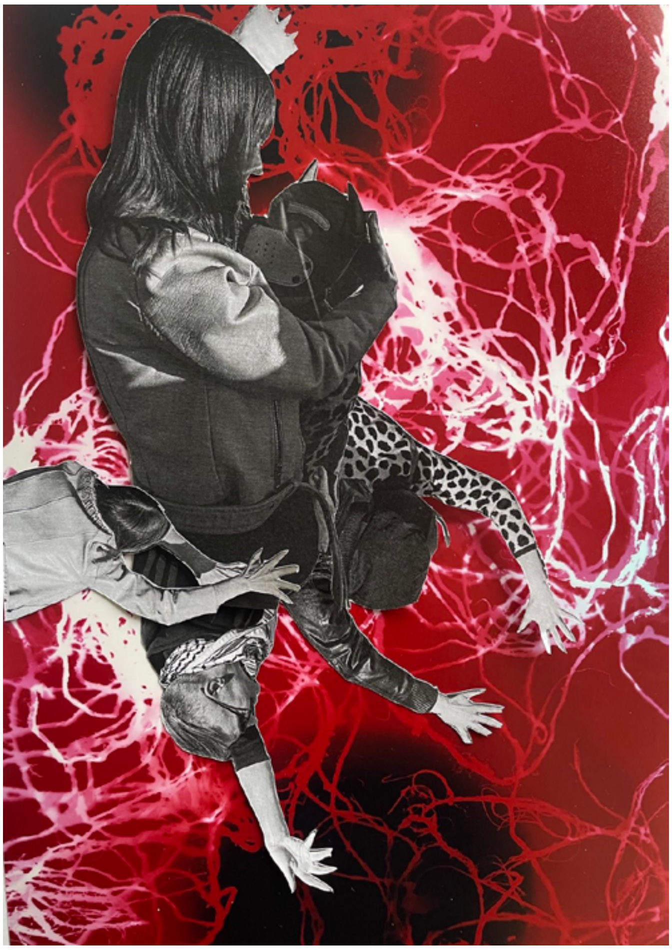


Myco-cosmos - inspiration for underground tactics

Carl von Linné, who in 1735 organised all organic life into the categories we still use today, both underestimated and struggled with the complexity of fungi. He loathed that they escaped his attempts of classification. At first he thought they were worms, then decided they belonged in the botanical kingdom. Among other derogatives, he referred to them as "Floras strövande pack" *("the wandering pack of Flora", which sounds way more pejorative in Swedish) due to their diverse and undefinable nature.*[7]

The mycelia is the vast underground network of fungal roots. It is the largest biomass on the planet, connecting organisms all over the world. It functions horizontally and decentralised, through a system of mutual aid and reciprocity. *Within itself and in entanglement with other species.* Water and nutrients are transported from where there is an abundance to where there is a need, and it also helps parts exposed to toxins or other harmful substances or conditions. When this happens the structures the mycelium grows through can dissolve. Dry rot (hussvamp, Serpula Lacrymans), for example, can consume entire buildings, if there is the right mix of darkness, moisture, oxygen and calcium hydroxide (lime). There are nodes from where hyphae can sprout and expand the network throughout the entire organism. Where the conditions are beneficial, fruiting bodies – mushrooms – can be formed and appear over ground.

The unruly and escapable nature makes the queendom of fungi[8], as Ostendorf prefers calling it due to its clearly non-patriarchal order, a suitable companion for entangled underground and outsider organisation and resistance. The non-hierarchical interconnected structures based on care, belonging and mutuality can be adopted as modes of living and organising.



Häxringar / Fairy circles cultivating entanglement and nurturing the ecosystems in marginalised communities

There is a natural phenomenon when fungal fruiting bodies sprout in ringlike formations. In folklore, these phenomena indicated otherworldly presence and supernatural activities and it was believed fairy folk had come there to dance – and/or give a warning to the land-using humans. These are called "häxringar" in Swedish (häxa means witch), and fairy circles in English.
Non-conforming and non-compliant women have historically been accused of witchcraft. Using traditional healing methods and staying in connection with the non-human instead of adopting the new anthropocentric sciences was often a reason for suspicion in Western societies. Fairy is a slur used against gay men and men who don't perform normative masculinity or exhibit non-normative gender expressions.

Altogether this makes Häxringar / Fairy circles quite a good symbol for disobedient and joyful queerfeminist interventions!

Either because you've chosen the ahuman approach and turned your back on humanity, or humanity has turned its back on you, engaging with the more-than-human creates new possibilities.

Leaning on and learning from the non-human form of the myco-cosmos, I am focusing on strategies for thriving and surviving for marginalized bodies and precarious lives, in a world hostile to those deviating from societal norms and standards. *I am calling this investigation Mycelial Methods and Queer Counteractions.*

Here I am suggesting the use of "queer" as a slightly broader term than just a letter in the acronym defining sexualities and gender identities. *I want to use queer also as a radical position of questioning and critiquing systemic CIS-heteronormative power structures and anthropocentrism.*

But regardless of semantics: Queer people's human rights are under attack. Queer voices are being erased from history, and victories once won need to be kept protected from conservative backlash.[9]

Constant minority stress as well as other forms of discrimination are tedious. Perpetual resistance is exhausting. But even though we might just want to curl up into little

balls and forget about the rest of the world – *now is not the time for apathy and disconnection!*
Action is urgent, as well as finding resilient, reliable and sustainable ways of organising, living and fighting together, and staying connected in challenging times.

Burn-outs and organisation fatigue are common side effects of activism and community work. Mycelial methods and queer counteractions are striving to develop long term and sustainable structures, where to learn and relearn togetherness in caring, creative and regenerative manners. Through radical kindness, self-expression, queer joy and remediating rest and rage, the resilient communities required to live decent lives in spite of the approaching neo-fascism world order might be built. *Perhaps even fight it back.*

Organising clusters – häxringar and fairy circles – where to experience and practice entanglement is an alternative to alienation. Like the mycelia they are non-hierarchical, direct-democratic, immediate and reciprocal formations, fluid, interchanging and adaptable. *Ready to build up as well as tearing down.*

First come murals, then evictions- artwashing as placemaking.

(or what that matcha latte really costs...)

Most people growing up queer move to bigger cities to find their people. Cities have the capacity of heterogeneity, and those growing up feeling different can find the communities where they feel seen, safe and supported. The city has also been a refuge and a haven for subculture, political movements and radical or alternative communities. *Counterspaces and in-between-places have existed where misfits, freaks and other willing as well as involuntary norm breakers could hide or thrive.*

However gentrification – *the neoliberal experiment developing Western cities into profit optimising deserts of over-priced wine bars, fancy office spaces and swanky hotels* – has put an end to that. In this cultural monocropping there is no space for anyone or anything potentially devaluing the market values of lucrative properties. Or what isn't cost efficient and financially viable.
In the process of placemaking, where an area is transformed into a district of higher status and market value, the previous identity of that neighborhood is often used as marketing. *It isn't by bulldozers quite as often anymore, the shift in character rather comes through infill development, evictions and raised rents.* The legacy of the replaced inhabitants is used for building the new brand. This is especially common when it comes to art and culture.

Street art, neighborhood festivals and community spaces are what gives areas vibrance and attractivity in the first place. But by the time the new

residents move in, the cultural depletion has rendered the promising project barren. Needless to say, in a society that economically values art less and less, yet expects art – like any other natural resource – to just continue to exist and freely be mined and exploited, no artists or cultural workers can pay the new living costs.
And when the big, commissioned murals start to appear in your neighbourhood – it is time to start packing…

If "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" [10] *- let's dream big now!*

Greed. It's insatiable. And it is so very normalised. Counting wealth in "billions" has become a new standard. And profiting on other people's basic needs - like housing - is labeled "smart" rather than "parasitic".
Ecofeminism, as well as ahumanism, recognises intrinsic worth beyond anthropocentric valuations, advocating for the acknowledgment of the inherent value of non-human entities. In a capitalist context, on the other hand, "value" is strictly market-related.

Seeing value only in monetary creditworthiness seems to me like utmost poverty. How poor must not the lives and souls be of people who treasure real estate and Teslas higher than life..?
And: *- yet again - on a dead planet, your money will be worth nothing!*

Such an impoverished, sad and unimaginative way to see the world.
And dangerous! We can no longer afford having them in power and control!

So we need to gather all our Häxringar and Fairy circles. Reach out - *with mycelia, tentacles, creepers and claws -* to all our more-than-human allies. Let our unruly entangled forces disrupt this corrupt, outdated and harmful system.

Building something new as we break this old one down.

And in its ruins, let a thousand
~~flowers~~ species blossom.

"Artwashing describes the use of art and artists in a positive way to distract from or legitimize negative actions by an individual, organization, country, or government—especially in reference to gentrification."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artwashing

Assemblage

Practicing entanglement through collaborative image making.

A visual result of the practice of queer counteraction can be made through the gathering of a fairy circle, sharing different areas of knowledge to create an entangled image.

In the case of the images for this publication, the collaborative process begins with a small group of artists using different mediums meeting and sharing experiences and ideas. Intertwining our artistic practices in photograms of mycelium, staged photography sessions including artworks, and collaborative collage making, the circle is creating an entangled image that could not have been made in isolation.

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3. *EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Colony Collapse Disorder", accessed April 15 2025, https://www.epa.gov/pollinator-protection/colony-collapse-disorder#:~:text=Colony%20Collapse%20Disorder%20is%20the,immature%20bees%20and%20the%20queen.)*
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7. *Hans Nydahl, "Svampar, "Floras strövande pack", Sollerö Hembygd.se, accessed April 15 2025, https://www.sollero-hembygd.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Svampar-Floras-stravande-pack.pdf, 15.*
8. *Ostendorf, 172*
9. *Queer as subversive*
10. *Ian Thompson, James Esseks and Leslie Cooper, "Trump on LGBTQ-rights", American Civil Liberties Union, accessed April 15 2025, https://www.aclu.org/trump-on-lgbtq-rights.*
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Jakob Niedziela

Jakob Niedziela is an artist and writer, educated at the art academies in Umeå and Reykjavik. His main mediums are sculpture, performance and text. After graduation, he wants to move to a sheep farm and/or become a puppeteer.

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ATTENTION, ADHDERS!*

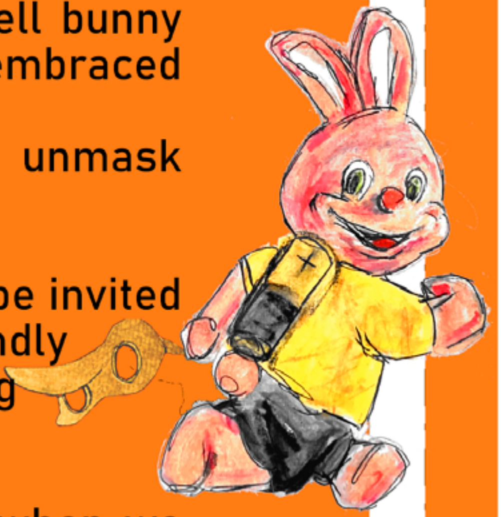
* notice how I didn't make any sort of pun here? NGL, pretty proud of myself for resisting.

I am holding a number of small workshops (max 6 participants each time) only for ADHDers, ages 18+

For one afternoon we will be making simple rabbit masks out of paper mache and cardboard, while we discuss our experiences of ADHD masking.

What does it actually mean to "unmask" your ADHD?
Can ADHD masking be both a defence mechanism and a strategic tool?
Could (or should) the Duracell bunny as an ADHD stereotype be embraced and reclaimed?
Can we mask together to unmask together?

In April, all participants will be invited to partake in a beginner-friendly Zumba® dance class, wearing our new bunny masks!



I'll tell you more about this when we meet!

January 2025

I remember being called a Duracell
I remember being called a Duracell rabbit as a child. The messaging confused me – by comparing me to this adorable, energetic battery mascot, adults were indicating that my behaviour was unacceptable and needed me to correct it.

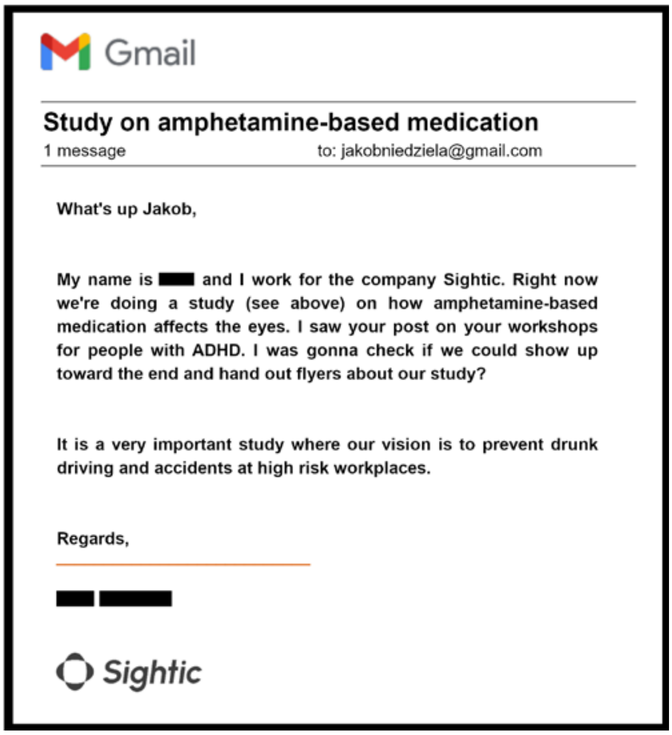
But what if I didn't? What if, instead of wasting energy on trying to suppress my energy, my impulses, my personality, I choose to fully embody the Duracell rabbit role? If, instead of covering my face with a normative mask to hide my ADHD, I donned a pink rabbit mask?

What if you did it too?

February 2025

I dream of places where things can remain unsaid, where bodies do the speaking, body language as mother-tongue (since stimming – movements repeated seemingly in perpetuity for the sake of repetition in perpetuity – since stimming is my mother-tongue), where the tapping of toes and clicking on tongues set the agenda, we sway before and behind the beat. The T. rex arms turn like sunflowers toward the speaker, who with a soft lisp to his body language lifts his wrist and drops his thumb ever so slightly, and in all of our mother-tongues we drop our shoulders and let out a cry, an echolalic AEAEAEAEAE (tasting the vowels to understand the depths of each other's exhaustion, of having to explain the things better left unsaid). I feel like the most beautiful hybrid, the Lupisaurus Rex, when I dance. Their studies speak of hypo-, hypersensitivity, vestibular input and proprioception, I speak no other language but my mother-tongue when I dance.

March 2025



Gmail

Study on amphetamine-based medication

1 message to: jakobniedziela@gmail.com

What's up Jakob,

My name is [redacted] and I work for the company Sightic. Right now we're doing a study (see above) on how amphetamine-based medication affects the eyes. I saw your post on your workshops for people with ADHD. I was gonna check if we could show up toward the end and hand out flyers about our study?

It is a very important study where our vision is to prevent drunk driving and accidents at high risk workplaces.

Regards,

[redacted] [redacted]

Sightic

April 2025

Dear bunnies,

there are 20 of us. There are 15.5 million of us. We are 2.5% – wait, 4.4% – no, 6.0% of the population. We are the epidemic they talk about in the headlines.

Some of you have told me you also feel like Duracell rabbits. Some of you have told me you do not. Some of you are floppy eared Flemish giants, or Omiltemi cottontail rabbits – rediscovered just last month, after having been presumed extinct for the past 120 years – or wild city rabbits, coming out late at night with your ears swaying satellite dishes, dashing out of sight of the occasional car passing on the highway. We have endless energy because our nervous systems are on the outside, constantly on high alert. We hide our stims under the table, in our pockets, under our eyelids. We only come out at night.

I gathered you in small groups. Some of you showed up with friends, and some of you met me one on one. Most of you were nervous and hesitant about coming, because you didn't fully know what to expect. I probably would not have been brave enough to attend a workshop like mine – I am humbled and grateful that you were.

We are not the same, yet we are often presumed to be. We made our own masks, because we always have. When I look at them all together now, I notice how you've taken inspiration from each other's making. Yet I can tell you all apart and remember who made what mask.

Some of you have ADHD networks of friends and support systems. For others, including me, this was our first experience of being in a room where you don't need to explain yourself.

I took no photographs and made no recordings of our meetings, as I had promised you from the beginning, and I never regretted this decision. The important thing was never what we said, but that we got the chance to speak, to mirror each other's experiences, contrast and compare.
As this project comes to an end, I hope you go out into the world remembering the words of our saviour and protector, patron saint of unmasking, Saint Duracell:

> *"When it comes to making them last*
> *longer we never stop.*
> *Trusted everywhere.*
> *Power their toys. Power their future.*
> *No other battery looks like it.*
> *No other battery lasts like it.*
> *Into a world where things like trust,*
> *and facts, seem to have lost some*
> *meaning, trust is power, and there's*
> *no power you can trust like Duracell."*

With all the love swelling in my rapidly beating heart,

Kuba

Masking is the act of hiding your impulses/reflexes/natural behaviours/ personality behind a metaphorical mask as if it were a physical mask (and a waterproof one at that). We'll quickly conceal socially inappropriate emotions, overflowing joy and despair, with a shield of indifference, to cover what's different. Masking is to not jump from the third story window just because you crave some fluid resistance (and ADHDers are prohibited from getting their skydiving licences). We mask to protect ourselves, and we mask to protect others. To be forced to put on a mask to avoid social repercussions is a natural part of life. For many minorities, it is a way to protect the group (stomp stomp). That's why they call me Thumper! (stomp stomp stomp)

Most people keep several masks that they switch between, depending on context. For some of us the mask has been glued on so tight we can't remove it even when we're alone. Under this thing, my skin is as smooth and translucent as a neon pink fetus.

Masking leads to burn-out, job promotions, delayed diagnosis, suicidal ideation, successful marriages, self-preservation, laser vision, self-adjustment skills, greater social inclusion, loss of identity and great personal development as impressionists and stage magicians (stomp stomp stomp stomp).

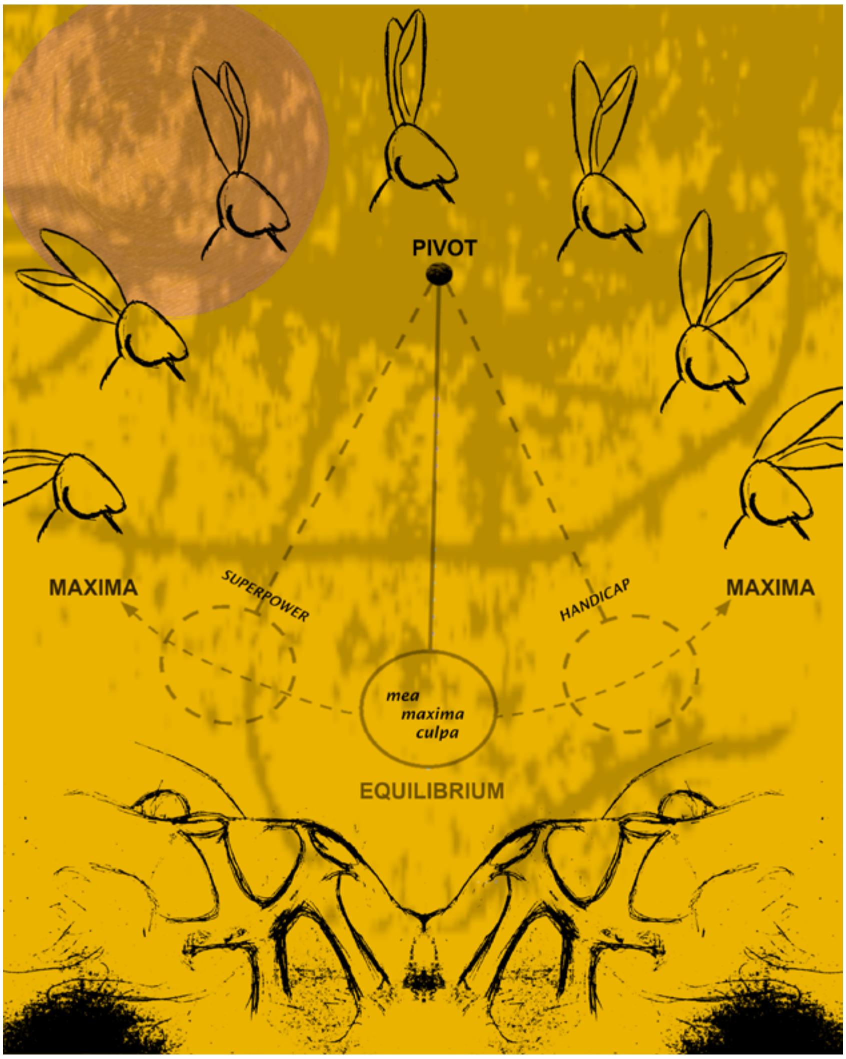
Franz Fanon used the mask metaphor in his 1952 book "Black Skins, White Masks" to discuss the condition of code-switching for Black individuals operating under colonial cultural norms. The idea of social camouflaging being comparable to the theatrical actor's use of a mask was popularised by Erving Goffman in his 1956 book "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life". The great amount of work behind the creating of that mask and keeping it on remains hidden. Nobody gives a shit about the Academy award for best makeup and hairstyling. Social masking or camouflaging is an acknowledged concept in the intersection of gender studies and autism research. Critical autism studies are slowly establishing themselves, through a stubborn kicking of heels until they're firmly stuck in the mud. ADHDers are too unfocused to pull that kind of impressive shit together.

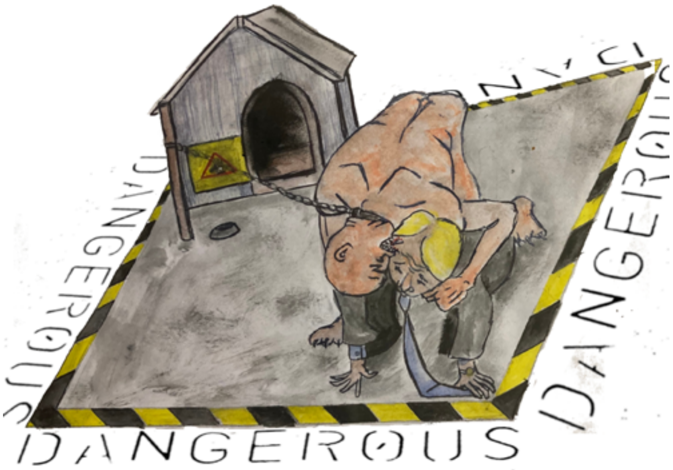
What's the most inappropriate thing a stranger has told you when they find out you're ADHD, I asked in an internet forum. (stomp) Why would I tell a stranger about my ADHD, someone else responded.
(stomp stomp)

It's just like with tattoos, I feel unique because I'm the only one left who doesn't have a diagnosis these days (stomp stomp stomp stomp stomp) and the psychologist said you're severely mid, mid to severe, mildly severe A D H D/A D H D/A D H D/hey motherfucker are you/A D H D/A D H D/A D H D/you jump around like you/A D H D/A D H D/A D H D/ you catching steel like you/A D H D/A D H D/A D H D/you fuck around like you/'re an astronaut, a space cadet, a crashing jet (smashing a bottle of Prosecco against my pouting cheek) a Martian babe on an earthly holiday, I hereby define you as a UFO, a Duracell bunny, so/I hopped my way/ right the fuck out of there...

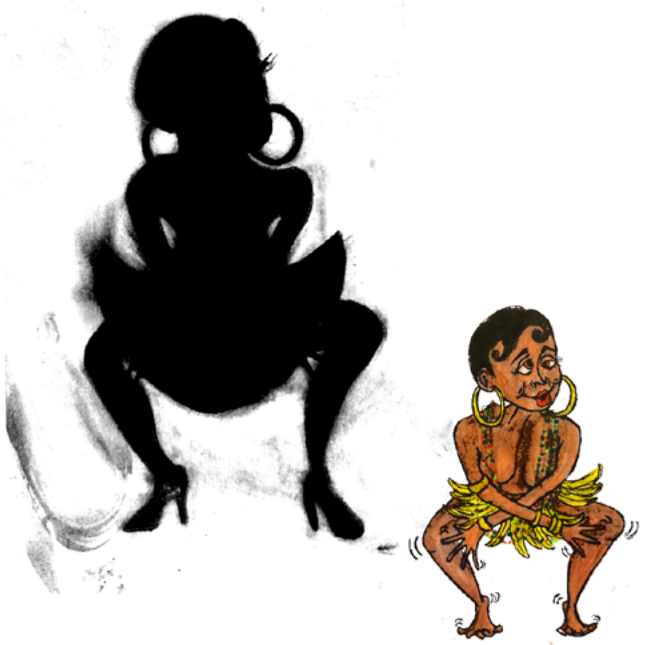
...then I heard him say something about legal speed, so I hopped my ass right back in again...

but you know what I mean. I know you know what I mean. You know what I mean? I mean –

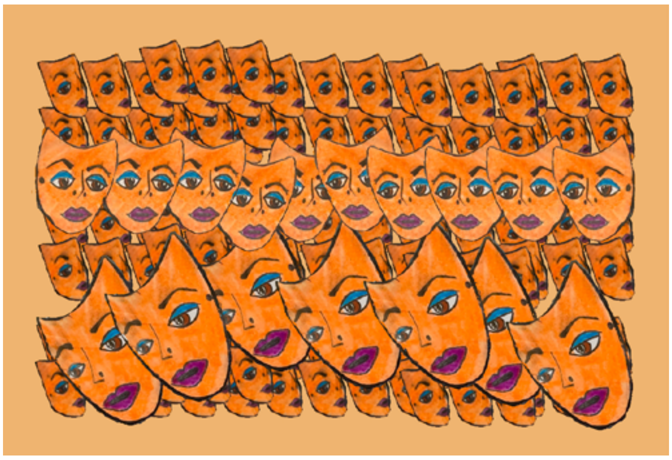

PIVOT
MAXIMA
SUPERPOWER
HANDICAP
MAXIMA
mea maxima culpa
EQUILIBRIUM



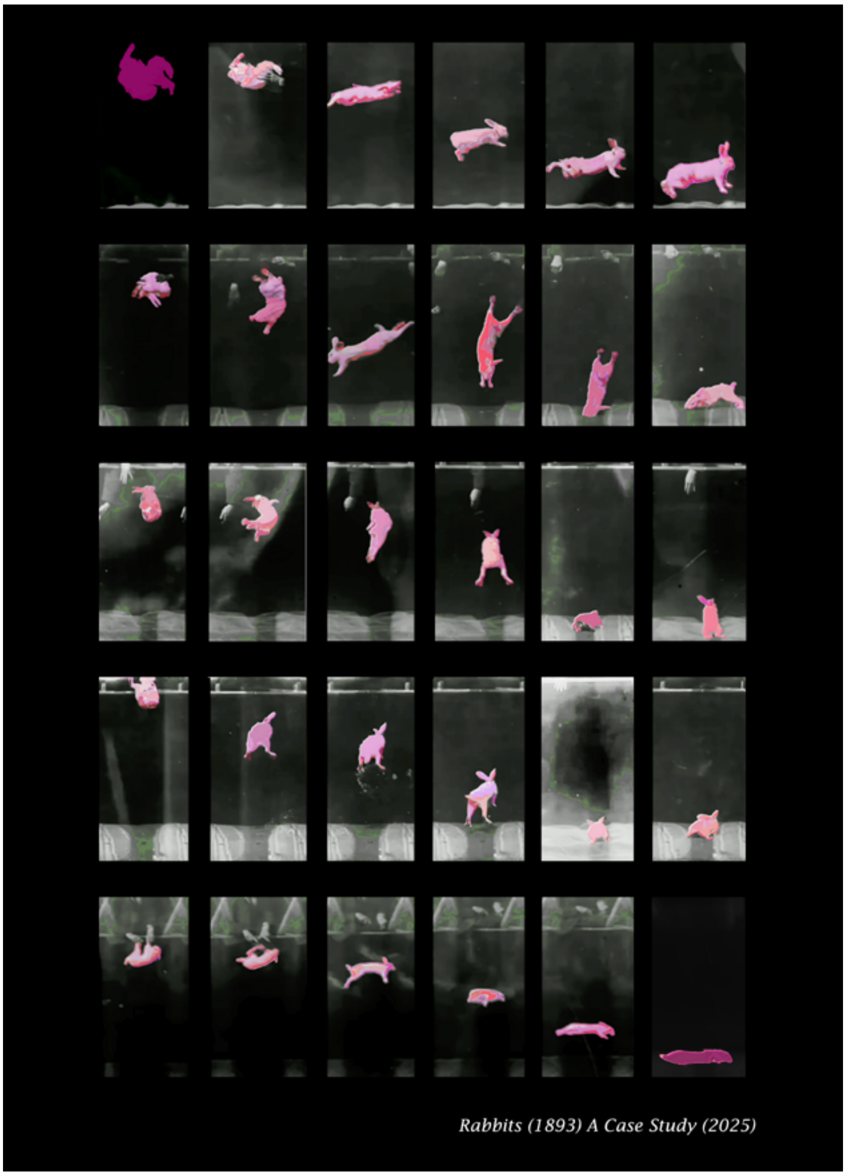
Oleg Kulik performed as a dangerous dog, a symbol of what the rest of the world would expect a Ukrainian born Russian male artist to be – all muscle, no thought. When a man ignored all warning signs Kulik the dog jumped on him and bit his face, but it was Kulik the man who had to spend the night in jail.



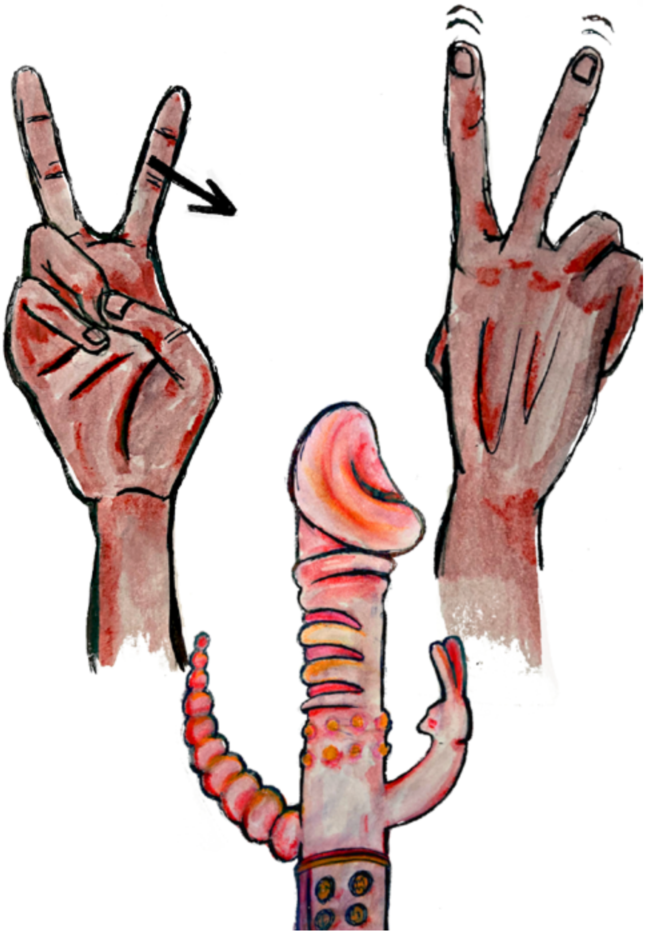
Josephine Baker would often make grimaces – crossing her eyes and puling a goofy pouty smile – when photographed in her minimal dance outfits. As the first black woman to star in a major motion picture, she was often cast to perform as an African stereotype. Her grimacing was a way for her to gain control of the way she was portrayed in photographs.



In her performances, Narcissister dresses up the way others expect her to be, always wearing a cheap Black Barbie doll face mask. In 2012, with the rise of protests under #freethenipple, Narcissister extended the offer to wear her face to others, of all gender, race, nationality and age, and continues to exhibit sent in photographs and videos of these various Narcissisters as her own work.



Rabbits (1893) A Case Study (2025)



Marie Bergqvist

Rooted in Gothenburg's indie scene and Angereds Writing School, Marie Louise Dilmaya Bergqvist, (born 1980, Kathmandu), blends primarily text, voice, and music in a remix-based practice. In collaboration with the Gothenburg Natural History Museum, she explores transracial adoption and the 1865 whale calf's taxidermy, focusing on separation, transformation, and erasure.

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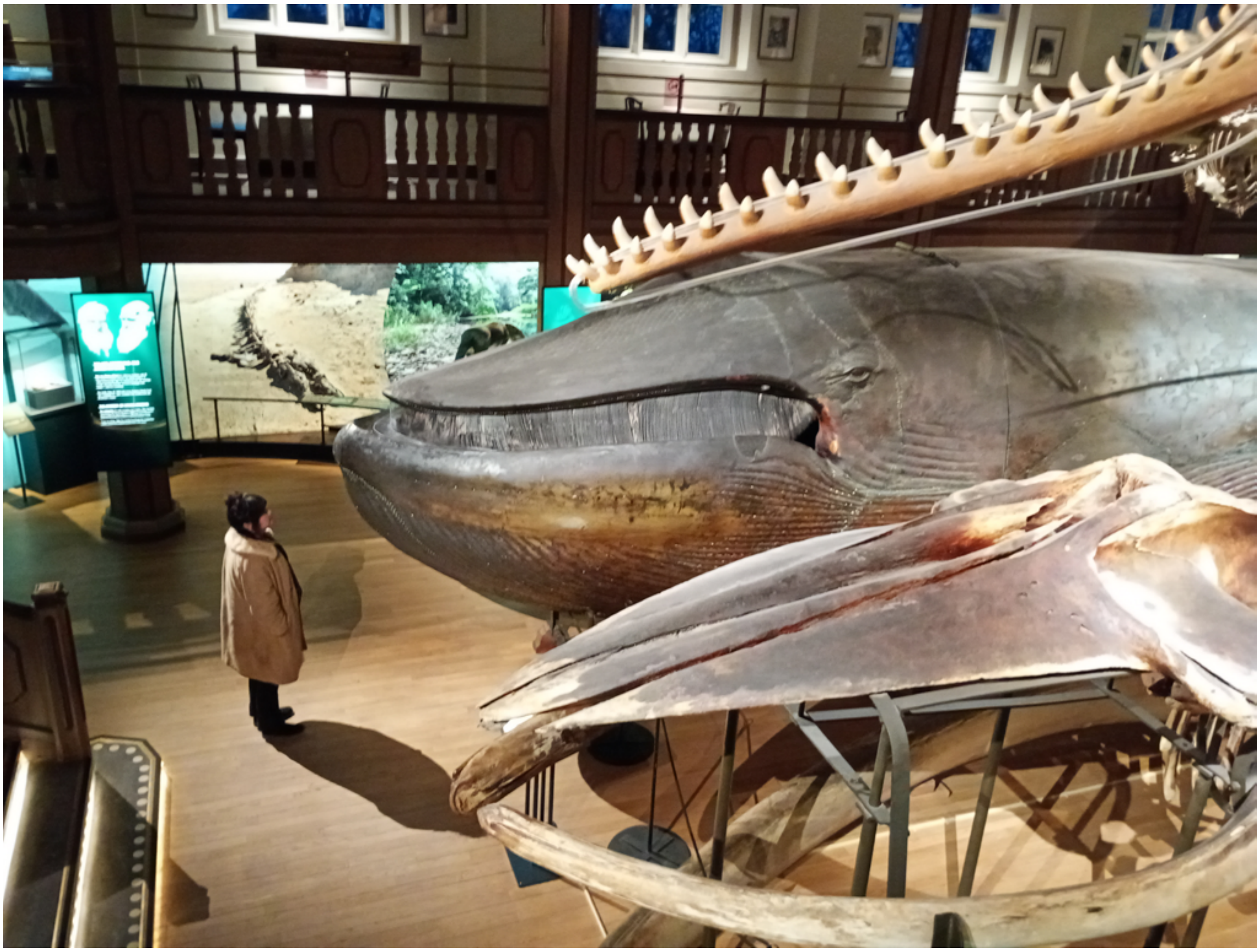
SINGING TO THE DEAD

essay - audio walk - choir

I speak to you
because I have stopped caring about
my proportions
I speak to tell you
I am searching for a time and place
where god is hidden



choir member Linda Mee Engberg & the whale calf at the
Gothenburg Natural History Museum 2024. credit: @sanktmarie

He was a magnificent creature with
the face of an amiable giant who
would do no harm.

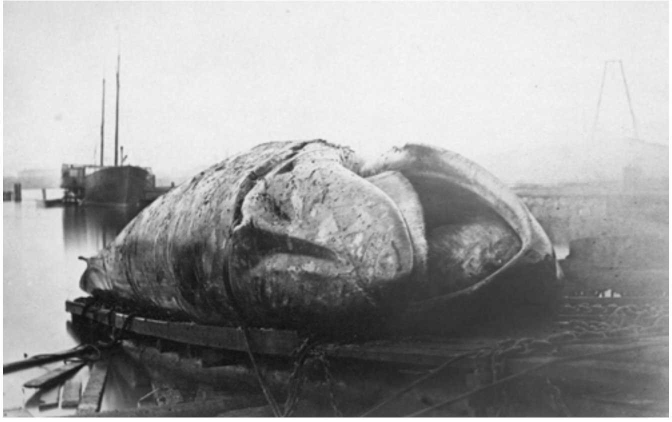
(Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in
the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," 1984)

My work connects transracial adoption with the whale calf that in 1865 was killed, taxidermied, and placed in the Natural History Museum in Gothenburg. Although the connection between adoption and the whale calf may not seem obvious, for me—as a transracial adoptee who has long seen myself reflected in Western narratives of separation between nature and culture, whiteness and animality—this association feels logical, since this separation is often described as a loss that humanity has forgotten and yet continues to suffer from.

As an adoptee, I too don't know what I've forgotten—only that there is a separation, a loss.

The death of nature as the rebirth of Man is the overarching Western narrative of separation that has long informed my artistic practice. In my essay "BECOMING UNSETTLED: TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION AND THE 1865 ASKIM WHALE CALF" I center adoption and the whale calf within this narrative—as two unique historical events shaped by forced, man-made transformations under colonial and patriarchal power. As such, they echo Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, in which the scientist reshapes life and death through his monster-child.

Extract from audio walk;
Abandoned children, like Frankenstein's monster, trapped in non-human bodies, and ancient myths where women transform into animals or nature to survive male domination, often undergo changes only in their outward form. In contrast, I, as a transracial adoptee, have been internally transformed, molded by the stories in which I tried to find myself as a child. But they were never a home. On the contrary, they were often stories of men who had the power to control life and death, sometimes over a whale calf, sometimes over people who bore likeness to me—like Frankenstein's experiments, on the 'creature rejected by mankind with the face of an amiable giant.



TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

"Transraciality entails identifying with a race one was not biologically born into. In adoption contexts, transraciality often places a child across racial boundaries, typically from non-white to white families."
Transracial adoption often overlaps with transnational adoption, as most children are relocated from former colonies to colonizing nations. Sweden is a nation with a strong pro-adoption discourse, national post-racial myths, and a colorblind ideology.
This colorblind approach means that Sweden neither acknowledges race in discourse nor in law.

THE WHALE CALF

The whale calf was killed in 1865 by two fishermen, then taxidermied and placed in the Natural History Museum of Gothenburg—a museum that, like many Western institutions, shares a history of unethical colonial collecting practices.

In my essay, I connect transracial adoption to the killing of the whale calf, arguing that human subjectivity is created by separating oneself from nature, in order to dominate it. As the killing of animals is linked to the colonization of non-white people, the separation from nature and animals has become intertwined with the creation of racial differences, enabling the domination of both.

One evening, while working in elderly care, I told a man I assist that I work with transracial adoption. He immediately mentioned how wealthy people used to adopt children as status symbols. Given the link between animality and racialization through colonialism, I believe he was suggesting that transracially adopted children are seen as trophies. I connect this colonial legacy

of hunting and specimen collection to the illegal hunt for children.
Transracial adoption is the largest forced migration of children in history, beginning when colonial officials brought children from the Global South to the Global North during conflicts like the Korean War and Pinochet's dictatorship. As demand grew, especially with the decline of the welfare state and second-wave feminism, child trafficking surged in the 1970s and 1980s when ethical guidelines were lacking.

Nepal, from where I was adopted 1982, stopped adoptions in 2015, but never signed the Hague Convention on Children's Rights. Legal protections remain unclear, prompting apologies from the government to adoptees in the Netherlands, while Denmark halted transracial adoptions, and Sweden and Norway are currently considering a ban. In most European countries and the US, nothing has changed.

THE PRESENCE OF DEATH

Necro: death

Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics links human subjectivity to the power over life and death. It operates in states of emergency— "death worlds"—unique social conditions where populations facing extreme exclusion, conflict, or war live with constant exposure to death. In these conditions, they are reduced to mere biology and can be killed without consequence.

As the displacement of impoverished children from the Global South to the Global North is tied to the legacies of war, conflict and colonialism, transracial adoption connects to Mbembe's concept of "death worlds", by exploiting death to create life through the movement of children.

Transracial adoption, as a unique historical phenomenon, has created a new colonial condition in which adoptees face exclusion from both their birth cultures and adoptive countries— through mechanisms like imposed whiteness. In Sweden, which has the highest per capita adoption rate, adoption trauma remains unacknowledged. I believe such mechanisms of exclusion are linked to the fact that transracial adoptees in Sweden represent the demographic with the highest rate of suicide attempts. I argue that the lack of institutional support for transracial adoptees reflects a form of "slow death", where necropolitics shapes everyday life by accepting the suffering and early death of certain groups.

As Mbembe writes, "Under necropower, death and freedom are intertwined, blurring the boundaries between resistance, sacrifice, and suicide."

TAXIDERMY & ADOPTION

Animals, reduced to mere biological existence in the human-animal divide narrative, can be killed without violating laws. In this context, Mbembe's state of emergency is the exception of being non-human. And so, the taxidermied whale calf allows the public to relive—and thus normalize—the fishermen's act of killing, as trophy-taking extends necropolitics into everyday life, while obscuring its colonial dynamics.

Taxidermied animals, reshaped to represent an idealized version of nature, mirror the experience of adoptees, who are similarly reshaped—often through falsified or absent documentation—to fit into dominant narratives. In both cases, the violence inflicted upon us is obscured, turning these acts into both erasure and reproduction, as a new identity is imposed on both the animal and the adoptee.

The idea, common in 1960s Sweden, that adoptees could help Swedes become non-racist simply by being non-white, reflects how adoptees are forced to transform and be transformed, justified by a narrative of benevolence. This mirrors the logic of taxidermy, where the animal's death serves to elevate the white boy into patriarchal manhood. The moment of domination and killing becomes one of intimacy and remembrance, reinforcing a savior narrative that ties white morality to the infantilization of the colonized.
Adoptees—even in adulthood—are often seen as eternal children, frozen in time much like the whale calf. In this process, the colonized (analogous here to transracial adoptees) are reduced to helpless figures in need of saving, with necropower operating both literally—killing the "inferior"—and metaphorically, destroying a culture to "save" its people.

SINGING TO THE DEAD

In the first term of this master's program, I was advised to deepen my understanding of transracial adoption before approaching the whale calf. TAR, the National Organization for Transnational Adoptees—an organization that raises awareness about adoption and critically examines irregularities within the Swedish adoption system—has been invaluable in this process. I was therefore especially grateful when TAR invited me to present my essay.

This and other interactions with the community have enabled me to listen to other adoptees' perspectives and to invite participants to join the adoptee choir I've been working with—leading up to a manifestation where we sing to the whale at the museum, accompanied by an audio walk.

This ongoing process—engaging with the adoptee community, writing the essay, and shaping both the audio walk and the choir—has taken form as my exam project "Singing to the Dead": an attempt to mirror oneself in the collective memories of Western storytelling from a subordinate perspective, as a way to grieve separations whose origins I cannot remember.

defined by stories of separation
my dreams resemble memories that
are not only mine
they settle like a little seed in my
belly perhaps the only thing that can
grow there

now born in womb water, then in air
— a child of different mothers
a little stranger in a foreign land
— I couldn´t escape dreams of flying
through windows
leaving the city for the sea that called
me home

like Icarus or an old siren
— the womb the tomb their fears
breathe in me as the tram passes by

AUDIO WALK - A DIALOGICAL LULLABY (18:24 min)

1-30/4 @the Gothenburg Natural History Museum

To access the audio walk, one scans the QR code found on a poster at the entrance of the museum, as well as in the Whale Hall.

I draw on Adriana Cavarero's theory of relational storytelling, which centers the embodied voice as a counter-narrative to the museum's framing of a universal humanity. In "Relating Narratives," Cavarero suggests that self-understanding arises through the presence of another—someone who listens, reflects, and holds our story. Vocal narration is a space of resonance that arises through dialogue between embodied individuals who become necessary to each other.

In this work, I imagine the silenced whale calf as one such "necessary other," reflecting on how he mirrors erasures in adoptee histories. By speaking and singing to the calf, I explore grief as a sign of meaningful loss and offer a sense of home and comfort—like a lullaby. This connects to preverbal times when attachments were disrupted, leaving us temporarily disconnected from the world. My method of addressing the dead whale calf—while simultaneously engaging in dialogue with Western stories of monsters and sirens—thus suggests that we always carry the voices of others, like the myth of Echo. This walk aims to express that resonance by disrupting the museum's 'vision of death' with my voice.

Audio Walk – A Dialogical Lullaby
Vetenskapsfestivalen: Magasinsvisningar
Föredrag: Svenska spindlar
Slöjdkväll på museet
Påsklov: Skapa ett eget diorama
Experimentshow med Beppe
Visning: Djur vid vatten- och strandbryn
Workshop: Bygg din egen fågelholk
naturhistoriska museum
Choir of adoptees – A Requiem
VALborg: Kliv in i Malmska valen
Sötvatten
HALSDJOTS

SINGING TO THE DEAD - A REQUIEM

"VAL"borg 30/4 @the Gothenburg Natural History Museum 2025 Requiem: "rest."

A requiem is traditionally a mass for the dead—a way to offer rest to souls and to honor those we have lost and who mattered to us.

The killed whale calf, its mouth opened on Valborg (Walpurgis Night)—silent, yet gathering us to sing—embodies how adoption is intimately tied to death. By forming a choir of adoptees singing two songs to the whale, I seek to honor both the whale calf's lost life and suffering, and the deaths and grief connected to adoption.

Adoption trauma is dismissed in Sweden, based on the belief that what we do not remember has not harmed us. Yet, as seen in Alzheimer's therapy, singing can reach unconscious processes that rational language cannot. This is why singing is central to my work: it connects to emotions and memories beyond conscious recall, especially those tied to our earliest bonds before separation.
We are 11 participants in the choir, adopted from different countries. But as my teacher, Jason E. Bowman, told me—and which moved me—"they are of you and you of them." Singing together as one body reflects this connection.

Initially, I was hesitant to approach other adoptees. As a marginalized voice that isn't often heard in public, I was afraid of having to represent others, thus reproducing erasures of adoptee experiences. I also feared they might not connect with the songs I created or the framing of the project, singing in the museum. However, the choir community has developed into a space of curiosity, where we respect each other's experiences—whether alike or different.

This is a presentation by one of the choir members, Andreas Hallén: Choir member Andreas Hallén has music, singing, and lyrics as passions in life, so when he heard about this rewarding choir project, he was quick to join. He feels that here, he can truly express his musical creativity alongside like-minded people.

Recording in S:t Birgitta's Chapel. Choir members Andreas Hallén and Emma Bobeck. © Sanktmarie 2025

Choir Rehearsal at Eklandagatan 86, at the Academy of Music and Drama (Högskolan för scen och musik) : Choir Leader/performer: David Andersson, Performers: Linda Engberg, Fanny Kimberly Dahlpil, Daniel Gustavsson. © Sanktmarie 2025

It may seem counterproductive, as someone who is afraid of working with representation, to decide to put a choir of transracial adoptees in a museum that collects specimens. As Jason pointed out, I am asking the choir to perform as transracial adoptees. But my intention goes beyond representation or aesthetic beauty. As I also discussed with my teacher Jesper Norda, choral singing is seductive—in this sense it thematically relates to Christianity's involvement in the practice of transracial adoption—thinking about "everything that creates harmony through erasure."

I believe that performing as transracial adoptees in the museum—an institution with a clear colonial past—makes it visible and audible that race does exist in Sweden, and that it is intertwined with loneliness, grief, death, animality, and colonialism. I also want to emphasize the importance of safe intimacy in the form of community, and the dissonance between collective memory and fractured memories that are filled in with dominant narratives.

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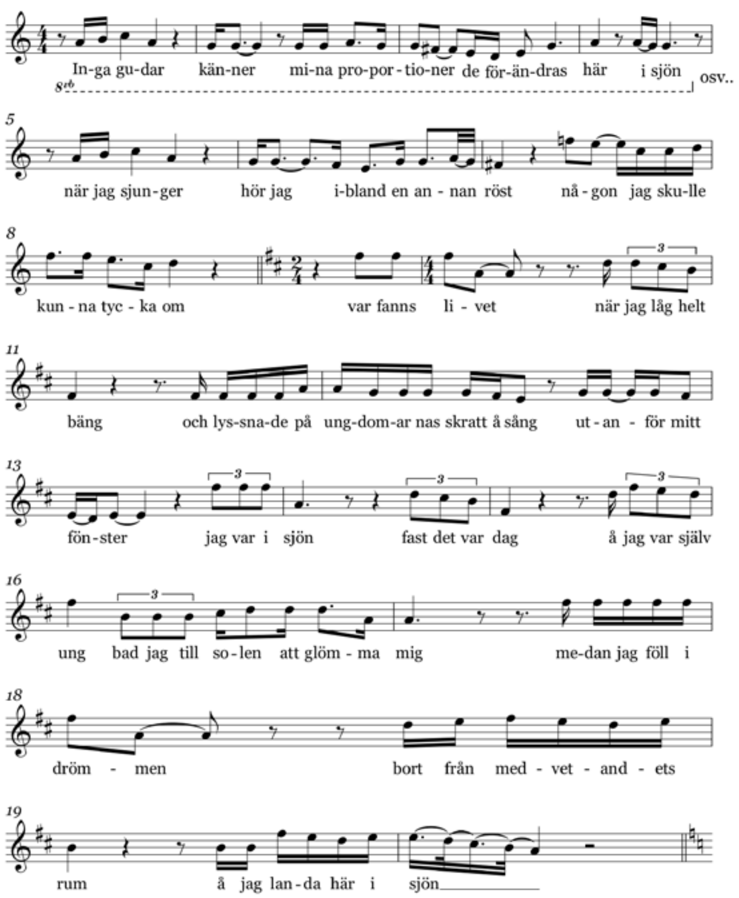
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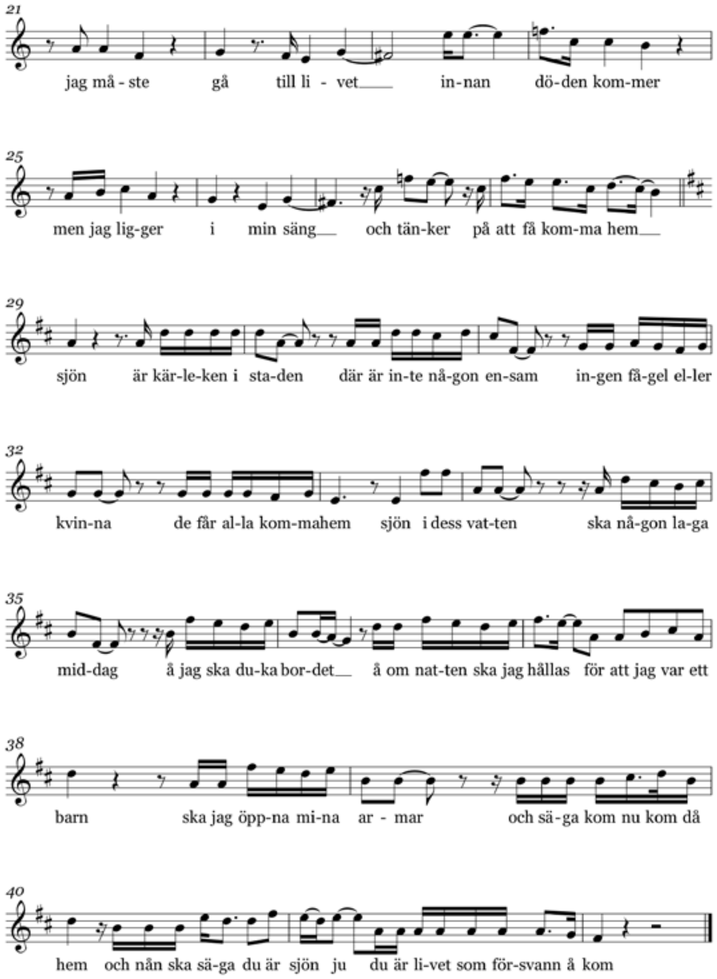
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kvin-na de får al-la kom-mahem sjön i dess vat-ten ska nå-gon la-ga
35
mid-dag å jag ska du-ka bor-det å om nat-ten ska jag hållas för att jag var ett
38
barn ska jag öpp-na mi-na ar - mar och sä-ga kom nu kom då
40
hem och nån ska sä-ga du är sjön ju du är li-vet som för-svann å kom

Maria Antchougova

Maria Antchougova (1994) is born in Crimea, raised in Belgium, and based in Sweden. With a background in drawing, printing, and self-publishing, her practice is shifting toward working with clay and sculpture. Influenced by Azoulay's "Potential History", she looks for ways to reconnect with what has been cut off, overlooked, or left behind.

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Thinking in tin-box archives: A personal method of collecting, remembering and refusing separation

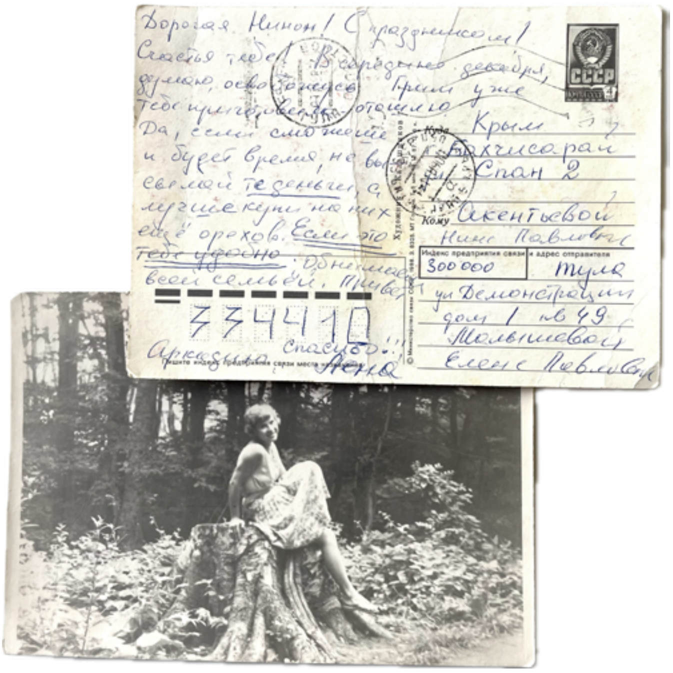
Somewhere along the line, you probably have or have had one of these in your life: a metal container once meant to store cookies or candy, now filled with something else entirely – fragments of life, scattered bits of memory, objects that you or someone close to you, at some point, thought was worth collecting. On days where you are supposed to re-organise your cupboards, you might get stuck looking through these tin-box archives instead, making new connections. Although these containers don't quite fit into official histories, they are valuable holders of memory in their own right. I've come to think of these tin boxes not just as storage of different valuable and less valuable fragments, but as a way of thinking and working. Thinking in tin-box archives is an informal method of collecting and remembering that operates differently from the epistemology of rigid, "objective", large-scale archives, meant to dictate history and knowledge: the things that we see as objective truth or reality. What are these large-scale archives missing out on, with their doctrine of categorisation and objectivity?

This text is written within the context of my project "Rehearsals of Refusal", an artistic research project that departs from my personal separation from the place where I was born and where my parents grew up: Crimea. Departing from an autoethnographic perspective, where personal experience is used to understand cultural experience, I question and think through notions of belonging on a bigger scale. Inspired by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's onto-epistemological experiment described in her book "Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism", I try / rehearse / practice not acknowledging hard borders, not only borders between countries but also the borders imposed upon us by imperialist ways of knowing and being (certain limits of acceptability, rigid categorisations, dogma's,...) like the borders between past and present, dead and alive, human and non-human, documented and undocumented. "Rehearsals of Refusal" builds a world of potential reconnection through work with clay, printed matter, drawing, writing, performance, and archival fragments. At its center is a video performance in which I ritualistically transform local Scandinavian clay by infusing it with salt, ashes, and powdered clay from the Black Sea region. This clay mixture becomes a material of healing and restoration. Using the clay, I build funerary vessels and reliefs. Alongside these, I present drawings, publications, and etched metal plates inspired by a personal tin-box archive containing photographs of my late grandmother, who lived in Crimea, and images of artefacts found there. Each element serves as a vessel of memory, holding space for grief and its potential transformation into repair. Through the use of autoethnography, speculative approaches to history, and small-scale personal archives, I draw on Azoulay's vision of "being with others across time", which means refusing the fixed separations between past and present, dead and alive, documented and undocumented.

In my project I'm exploring the collective through the personal, by departing from my own connections to Black Sea and North Sea regions, coming from Crimea, growing up in Belgium and now living in Gothenburg. My relationship to this place of origin has been mostly experienced through the diaspora. There are many ways in which Crimea has been secluded from all neighbouring countries except for Russia, being cut off from the EU and from Ukraine. Since 2014 there has been a hard border in place.

For me, a person who grew up being undocumented until I was about 12, having so many issues with documents, the fact that now we (my parents, brother and me) needed a Russian visa to visit Crimea made it almost impossible for us. Once my mom actually tried to get a Russian visa, but then all the questioning that we used to experience almost daily (about our migration, about our papers, why we moved and how...) and that we were so happy to leave behind us when we got our Belgian citizenship, returned. They questioned my mom about this at the Russian embassy and she just shut down and gave up because, understandably, it was too much to get back into this traumatic place of having to defend your identity and your place in the world, how you got from a to b. Most of the time, it just feels like we are normal, because we have this citizenship of an EU country. But there are some discrepancies between this totally normal, accepted, legal and documented self, and something else, something that was there before. I had a different family name and a different birth date and my whole life

I have been told to shut up about this, to accept this new reality and identity. To accept that now I am totally cut off legally from who I was before. This shifting between "being" legal and illegal, accepted and unaccepted and doing things like crossing borders illegally has definitely shaped my understanding of the world. Doing things outside of the normal, legal and accepted show that it is possible to exist outside of imperialist epistemologies. You don't need to blindly accept them. But there might be repercussions. And I have always been looking for ways to bring these separate pieces of myself together, not just within myself, but in the outside world. I don't want to be alone in this way of being and knowing. I'm looking for companions. I know I'm not the only one.



Дорогая Нинон! С праздником!
Счастья тебе! В середине декабря, думаю, освобожусь. Грим уже тебе приготовлен - отошлю.
Да, если сможете и будет время, не вы[illegible] свеклой те деньги, а лучше купи на них ещё орехов. Если это тебе удобно. Обнимаю всей семьей. Привет Аркадию. Спасибо!!! Лена

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Пишите индекс предприятия связи места назначения

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The war that has been going on since 2014 has been affecting all of us in so many different ways. According to Azoulay, all wars are imperialist wars. And it goes way beyond the question of Russian or Ukrainian ownership. Because changing legal status (following conquerings, annexations, claims, "legal" transfers, and so on) does not erase what has been there before. These hard borders and their dividing violence should not be there in the first place. The case of Crimea in particular, a place in-between many different cultures and inhabited by and fought over by many different peoples over time, makes this incredibly clear. It's not just about Crimea, it's about our whole shared world.

A personal glossary

Potential history: This is a term that comes from scholar and curator Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's eponymous book. The most all-encompassing definition I have found in the following quote from the book: "Potential history is a form of being with others, both living and dead, across time, against the separation of the past from the present, colonized peoples from their worlds and possessions, and history from politics" (Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism, pp. 43-45).

Epistemology: Way of knowing. There is not just one way of knowing, even though this is what we are told to believe by imperialism and its epistemologies. We don't have to believe that something is in the past and therefore finished or gone. Azoulay clarifies this by writing about Palestine. Even though the state of Israel was created there, Palestine still exists. And this is an exercise in unlearning imperialist epistemologies that we can apply to the whole world. Accepting these divisions is not our only option, we can also refuse them.

Autoethnography: Unlike with traditional ethnography, where the ethnographer comes in from the outside and does research about a group of people that they are not a part of themselves, with autoethnographic enquiry the researcher actually has a stake in said culture or group of people. This means that there is a different approach, usually more empathetic and personal and with less emphasis on creating an objective analysis filled with rigid categorisations. It's less about cultural exceptionism and exoticisation, which means looking for all the things that are different about a group of people compared to another group, but more about cultural interconnection: looking for things we hold in common.

ПОШТА
Д
УКРАЇНИ
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Индекс предприятия связи и адрес отправителя

The doctrine of the archive: Azoulay writes about "the doctrine of the archive", which means that often, when we are looking for the verification of the truth about something like a historical event, we look for this in big, scholarly archives and the problem is that these archives do not contain the full stories of what happened. So much is left out of the picture. And we are taught to see this as if it is the full picture. Azoulays concept of potential history tries to unlearn this way of knowing, this "doctrine of the archive".

Tin-box archive: Both literal and metaphorical containers of fragmented memory. In them are photographs, postcards, small notes, stories passed on. Things gathered without a formal, pre meditated system. A place to keep what might otherwise disappear, and a structure for thinking about how to hold together what has been cut off or overlooked in history.

Re-Inhabiting the Salted Earth

My graduation project has a slightly different timeline than most of my classmates' because last year I had to take a study break for health reasons. During that time, I developed my artistic practice (mostly) outside of the academic framework of HDK-Valand and at my own pace. I decided to join a ceramics workshop in my neighbourhood and focused on working with clay. It was something I had tried a few times before and had been wanting to explore more deeply. It became a central part of that time, which was as much about healing as it was about slowly figuring out my artistic practice.

What I discovered is that clay has regenerative potential. Not only as a material but also as a working process. It is incredibly open-ended. You can form almost anything with it, and you do not need to know how to at the start. Sometimes you begin with just a vague idea. Through kneading, moulding, punching, or gently shaping the clay, you figure things out along the way.

Working with clay also became a metaphor for how radical imagination can operate. You do not need to know in advance how to unlearn imperialist ways of knowing. That process can be experimental, intuitive, and open-ended too. Alongside dominant narratives and institutional histories, there are other ways of knowing. Many of these come from stories that were passed down informally. Others come from lived experience, speculation, or memory. They may not be easily documented or verified, but they still carry weight. When we try to piece together our personal and collective histories, the issue is not only that large-scale archives are inaccurate. The problem is that they are incomplete. So much is left out, excluded, or simply never invited in. There is knowledge that exists beyond what is considered official or objective. By bringing these fragments into dialogue, by kneading and moulding them into each other, we can open up the archive. This approach has become central to the way I work.

At the start of this term, the last term of the MFA, I decided that I wanted to work with Crimean clay because of what it could represent. Trying to get this material from the place I was separated from was a complicated and politically charged process. All the different ways in which I tried to get the material only made it more clear how isolated this place has become from the rest of the world. And it reinforced my desire to try and bring these disparate pieces together in my artistic research project.

Near Bakhchysarai, the city where I was born, I found a ceramics workshop. They work with local clay and sell it too. I contacted the owner through email and explained what I was working on. He responded kindly and said he'd love to help, but he just didn't know how to do it. As far as I understand, legally, you can only send parcels from Crimea to Russia. Not to the EU. Not to Ukraine. There is no direct postal route.

Even if the postal system had allowed it, shipping clay is complicated. It's heavy. At first, I imagined I would need a lot of it, for a large sculptural installation. But as it became clear how difficult this would be, I scaled it down in my mind. I thought that maybe I just need a tiny piece. Something small I could blend into locally available Scandinavian clay. But even that didn't work out.

I had to think of an alternative, something that was not as heavy and that I could infuse into local clay. A readily available export product of Crimea. I thought of salt. It felt more realistic. Salt is cheap and easier to ship. It's also symbolically charged. It's connected to the sea. It preserves and protects. It heals. It stains. It haunts. It's in sweat, in tears, in old rituals, and in everyday kitchens. The sea has always been a big part of the culture and history in the places I've lived. Salt and the sea carry many layers of meaning (healing, grief, preservation, migration, ghosts, hauntings, magic, etc). My idea was to infuse locally available clay with this salt, something that apparently is also done by construction workers to make brickwork easier. I also found out about salt-firing and salt glazes on ceramics. Salt and ceramics are logically connected in more ways than one. "Salting the earth" is a phrase tied to conquest and destruction. I started to think about what it might mean to do the opposite. To heal and re-inhabit the salted earth.

I found a few Crimean cosmetic webshops that sold sea salt. They were small businesses. I contacted them on WhatsApp. Each time, I got friendly but apologetic replies. They could send to addresses in Russia. But not to the EU. I asked whether they'd ever shipped through Turkey or Georgia. None of them had. The only option they offered was: do you have someone in Russia who can receive it? So I tried asking around. I asked my mother first. She asked her cousin Nadya, who still lives in Sevastopol. Nadya was willing to help and seemed to think it would actually be possible. She promised she would go to the post office and try. But it didn't work out. Her daughter Nastya (my cousin? second cousin?) who lives close to Moscow, also couldn't help because her husband is in the military. It would be scary for them because their parcels would probably be checked. On my father's side I have relatives who live in Saint Petersburg, they are also connected to the military. I didn't even dare to ask them.

After that, I tried in other directions. I posted in a group for Russian-speaking people in Gothenburg. I asked friends and friends of friends. Some were polite. Some didn't reply. I didn't blame them. It's a hassle. And it's not an easy time to be shipping things from Russia either. It's not impossible, but difficult and extremely expensive. Everything is slow. And people are cautious. Even those who wanted to help didn't know how.

My last chance was my colleague at work, Evgeniy. I have been working in retail part-time since last summer, and the person who hired me, the manager, is coincidentally the first person from Crimea who I have ever met outside of there. In March, right before he left to start a job in another city, he said he would go to Saint Petersburg for a week. I understood that this was my last chance of getting this salt on time for my exam project. It was a little bit awkward to ask, but I did and he said that he would help me out with this. I sent him a link where he could easily order it. Unfortunately, he didn't order it on time, so the parcel arrived when he had already left on a plane back to Sweden (through Turkey of course, because direct flights are also not possible right now). My last chance to get this precious, and at the same time very inexpensive day-to-day material, was lost.

1 МАЯ
С ПРАЗДНИКОМ!
СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО О КРЕЩЕНИИ

Eventually, my mother's cousin told me to just order from Bulgaria. "They have all the same products as us, It's the same sea," she said. And she was right. So I did. I ordered sea salt, healing powdered clays (the ones meant for face masks and mud packing), dried roses, and lavender. These are typical products you would find in Crimea as well. And in some way, it's more poetic to reach one place by a place that is nearby or connected to it.

The process of sourcing these materials became a big part of my research in this project. It exposed the political, logistical, and emotional barriers tied to the place I was trying to reach, and these became part of the work.

I understood that it's not so important to have these products literally from Crimea itself. Even though I like the idea that raw materials are infused with the symbology and magic of place, I'm not invested in being literal. I play with that idea, but I also find it a bit absurd. Bulgaria and Crimea, among other places, both border the Black Sea. They share certain products like rose petal jam, herbal teas, clay masks, lavender, sea salt. These products are tied to place, but they also circulate beyond it. The idea that something becomes more potent or more meaningful because of where it comes from is both compelling and constructed. My project sits with that tension.

It's not about proving the uniqueness of a place, or preserving it as something fixed. It's about exploring how places (like people, like objects) are always entangled with others. The idea of a single origin doesn't hold. Belonging, too, is made up of crossings, substitutions, improvisations. And so is this project. What stayed with me was not the failure to get the materials from the right place, but the long route I ended up taking. The delays, the refusals, the stretches of silence. The strange detours and unexpected conversations. All of that became part of it. Instead of being about the longing to get back to one singular place that is forever lost in time, this project is about repairing our whole shared world and the ruptures between us.

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